



UPSKILL HOUSTON

An Initiative of the Greater Houston Partnership



BUILDING MOMENTUM

UpSkill Houston—an unprecedented, industry-led collaboration—works to close the skills gap across the regional economy.

Sometimes it's a few statistics that are worth a thousand words.

- **41 percent** of all jobs in the Houston region—**1.4 million jobs**—are middle-skill positions, requiring education and training beyond high school but not a four-year degree.
- Middle-skill petrochemical jobs in Houston can pay a median wage of **\$30.61 an hour**.
- Just four years ago, **855,000** Houstonians 25 years and older did not possess the minimum credential for middle-skill jobs, and that number likely has increased since then.
- **74,000** middle-skill positions open up annually.

The math is easy: The mounting challenge for greater Houston's industries equals potential advancement for its citizens. The key lies in closing Houston's skills gap. According to *Preparing to Skill Up*, by JPMorgan Chase & Co., the

mismatch between job seekers' skills and businesses' needs threatens the region's economic growth and limits the financial well-being of millions of Houstonians.

UpSkill Houston addresses that mismatch in seven sectors critical to the area's economy: petrochemical manufacturing; industrial and commercial construction; healthcare; port, maritime, logistics; utilities; advanced manufacturing; and oil and gas—upstream and midstream. UpSkill Houston aligns stakeholders to pursue three fundamental objectives:

- **ATTRACT** unemployed and underemployed Houston residents and youth to middle-skill positions across the region—in part by raising awareness of and changing perceptions about these careers.
- **TRAIN** individuals in the technical *and* employability skills necessary for success—using curricula built around industry demand and aligned across a sector for portability.

- **PLACE** and retain these workers in middle-skill jobs on career paths that reward those who continue to upgrade their skills and mentor those who need a little extra support.

Success will paint a different picture. Houstonians who now lack the skills necessary for jobs that pay middle-class wages will possess know-how that employers value. Better wages will create shared prosperity. Developing the pipeline of middle-skilled talent will enable high-demand industries to fill vacancies created by rapid business growth and impending retirements. Long-term competitiveness will spur continued economic expansion throughout the region. There is strength in unity.



CAROLYN WATSON
Vice President, Corporate Responsibility
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

“Now the expectation in Houston is that if you're doing anything around workforce—whether you hire, train, or help people find jobs—you're part of UpSkill Houston.”

—Carolyn Watson



CONNECTING TO BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION



JONATHAN EUBANKS,
apprentice electrician, Trio Electric

Jonathan Eubanks was looking for more reliable work hours, a path to career growth, and wages that enabled him to better support his family. He didn't see those attributes in his security guard job. So, he went to his local Workforce Solutions career office to search for a new opportunity.

Trio Electric needed dedicated workers interested in becoming journeymen electricians. Trio's apprenticeship program hires individuals as full-time employees after a three-month evaluation period. Apprentices start at \$13 per hour and can earn \$22.50 by the end of the four-year program.

Those who take the journeyman's exam when they complete their apprenticeships earn \$34 per hour and up.

Eubanks connected with Trio through Neighborhood Centers Inc.'s ASPIRE program, launched in 2015 with JPMorgan Chase & Co., Workforce Solutions, and UpSkill Houston. Those organizations connected through a conversation initiated two years earlier by the Greater Houston Partnership (the Partnership).

In mid-2013, the Partnership formed a taskforce to tackle challenges preventing businesses in the Houston region from attracting, training, and hiring workers with the middle skills that drive the region's economy. Approximately 80 individuals participated on the taskforce—business, public sector, nonprofit, labor, and education leaders. "We wanted everybody who felt they had a vested interest or something to contribute to be at the table," said Gina Luna, CEO of Luna Strategies, LLC, who co-chaired the taskforce with Shell Oil Company President Bruce Culpepper.

The taskforce spent months carefully reviewing the data, defining the problem, and developing a plan to address it. That resulting blueprint called for a focus on seven sectors critical to the region's economy; collaboration to find region- and sector-wide solutions; participation from a diverse set of institutions; and the structure, resources, and convening opportunities to succeed. "We launched UpSkill Houston as the brand to capture all that," Luna said.

The Partnership's President and CEO Bob Harvey called UpSkill Houston critical to the region's competitiveness.

"We took this on because it was going to affect our economy if we didn't, and it was the right thing to do. Shared prosperity depends on access to opportunity. If large segments of our population don't have the skills to take advantage of available opportunities, it's their loss and the greater community's loss. We end up with citizens who can't support their families and businesses that can't find needed workers."

Eubanks and Trio demonstrate the value of breaking that cycle.



GINA LUNA
*CEO, Luna Strategies, LLC, and Chair
UpSkill Houston Executive Committee*



BOB HARVEY
*President and CEO
Greater Houston Partnership*



BRUCE CULPEPPER
*President
Shell Oil Company*

MAJOR FUNDING PARTNERS



JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.



INDUSTRY LEADS A DISTINCTIVE STRATEGY

Downsizing by his former employer cost Julian Delgadillo his job as a welder, but prompted him to broaden his outlook and communicate differently. With help from his mentor at the veterans assistance program NextOp, Delgadillo rewrote his resume to highlight experiences beyond welding and explored administrative as well as technical job opportunities. Six months later, Delgadillo was working again—in a field he hadn't previously considered, using skills he hadn't previously promoted.

Facing their own workplace challenge, Houston-area executives are leading coalitions of new partners, developing

common language, and taking collective action to prepare youth and unemployed and underemployed workers for middle-skill jobs critical to Houston's economy. UpSkill Houston serves as guide and convener—bringing industry together with nonprofits, government agencies, community colleges, K-12 school systems, and labor unions.

"At those first meetings, with all the players at the table, UpSkill Houston helped us build relationships across sectors and made sure we were all talking about the same issues," said San Jacinto College Chancellor Brenda Hellyer.


Allatia Harris, SanJac's vice chancellor for Strategic Initiatives, elaborated, "We had to define 'middle skills.' We had to define 'training.' We all perceived those ideas through our own lenses. I was thinking of the 'training' in colleges. I had to understand 'training' through the unions' lens and through the employers' lens."

The same was true of "collective action," UpSkill Houston's model for working together. Collective action encourages different groups addressing the same problem to establish a common goal, align efforts, pursue separate tactics, and share results. "The objective is to try things, change things, and have an impact," Harris said. "We didn't lose time waiting for someone to develop a plan. We didn't lose partners because they didn't want to march in someone else's direction."

A collaboration of the region's nine community colleges—the Community College Petrochemical Initiative—trains workers for area petrochemical plants. ExxonMobil's support last year helped CCPI increase petrochemical enrollment at those schools by **32 percent**.

Similarly, an unparalleled collaboration between the East Harris County Manufacturers Association and Associated Builders and Contractors leads an effort with CCPI and other community partners to develop skilled petrochem and industrial craft workers.

Companies must lead the way, said Barry Klein, general manager, Shell Deer Park. "When the message comes from folks who own the problem, the impact is greater," he said. "This is not easy work. But business stepping up to the plate is critical."



JULIAN DELGADILLO, *compliance manager,*
Construction Career Collaborative



BRENDA HELLYER
Chancellor
San Jacinto College



ALLATIA HARRIS
Vice Chancellor
San Jacinto College

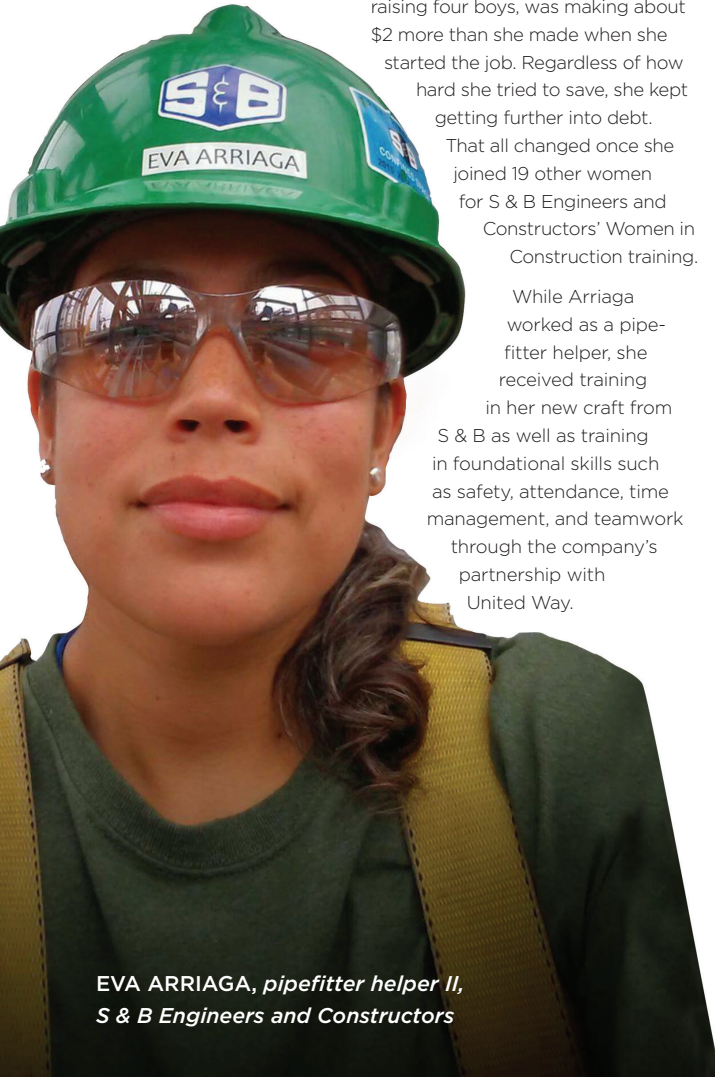


BARRY KLEIN
General Manager, Shell Deer Park
and Chair, EHCMA Workforce Steering Team

"This is not easy work. But business stepping up to the plate is critical."

—Barry Klein

ACCELERATING GAME-CHANGING APPROACHES



**EVA ARRIAGA, pipefitter helper II,
S & B Engineers and Constructors**

After four years as a medical assistant, Eva Arriaga, a single parent raising four boys, was making about \$2 more than she made when she started the job. Regardless of how hard she tried to save, she kept getting further into debt.

That all changed once she joined 19 other women for S & B Engineers and Constructors' Women in Construction training.

While Arriaga worked as a pipefitter helper, she received training in her new craft from S & B as well as training in foundational skills such as safety, attendance, time management, and teamwork through the company's partnership with United Way.

In the six months since finishing the program, she has continued to upgrade her skills with additional training and now makes twice the wage she did as a medical assistant. She's paid off her debt, bought her first car, and become a better provider for her family.

"UpSkill Houston is not just creating a talent pipeline for middle-skill jobs," said Dorian Cockrell, program manager at United Way of Greater Houston. "**UpSkill Houston is changing people's lives.**"

S & B's 2016 training program for women had a success rate of **80 percent**, more than twice that of other such programs at the company. The difference: extensive recruiting, significant screening, and training in employability skills to accompany technical training and job placement. Behind that difference: UpSkill Houston's work to attract, train, and place Houston-area residents and youth in middle-skill jobs. In this case, UpSkill Houston's construction sector council served as the catalyst, bringing together United Way's network on the supply side with S & B's need for workers on the demand side.

"We're able to help employers by recruiting people, screening potential workers, and then providing employability skills to enable those workers to stay employed," Cockrell said.

"For us, success is the graduation," said J.D. Slaughter, vice president at S & B. "If they drop out for any reason other than they don't like the type of work, that's a failure. If we terminate them because they have an 'attitude problem' or they don't have the skill set, then we didn't do our job well enough."

To date, the construction sector has screened more than **350 individuals**, interviewed about **130 potential candidates**, and trained and placed **55 workers**. The next step for UpSkill Houston's construction council, Slaughter said, is to take the model to scale and replicate it at companies across Texas.



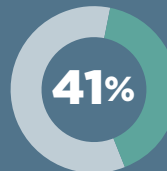
J.D. SLAUGHTER
Vice President

S & B Engineers and Constructors, Ltd.



DORIAN COCKRELL
Program Manager

United Way of Greater Houston



41% of jobs in the Houston region require education and training beyond high school, but not a four-year degree.

