

Tree Care Industry Seeks Comprehensive Solutions to Workforce Shortages



Addressing workforce shortages through workforce development to ensure the prosperity of the Tree Care Industry.

The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) represents approximately 1,400 businesses nationwide that engage in commercial tree care, providing services to residential communities, state and local governments, commercial businesses, and utilities. Collectively, TCIA members employ more than 150,000 people, representing an estimated 75% of all tree care workers in the country.

Tree care companies are currently facing significant workforce shortages. To address this critical issue, TCIA offers our members a suite of essential tools designed to bridge the gap and assist companies in recruiting, retaining, and developing skilled employees. Working in arboriculture can be a rewarding career that pays a solid living wage, but the physical challenges and inherent dangers of an arborist's life are not for everyone. We must, therefore, enhance workforce development efforts while acknowledging that the domestic labor market alone cannot meet our industry's workforce needs.

Workforce Development: Building a Skilled Workforce

TCIA has an extensive and impressive record in worker training and apprenticeship programs. As of July 2023, TCIA is recognized as a Department of Labor Apprenticeship Ambassador, demonstrating our commitment to expanding the workforce and diversifying the tree care industry. In 2018, TCIA led the creation of the National Arborist Apprenticeship Guideline Standards, providing tree care companies with effective recruitment, training, and retention solutions. These standards, combined with TCIA's Arborist Apprenticeship Training program, equip employers to develop skilled professionals in a challenging hiring environment. TCIA actively supports companies and institutions seeking to sponsor apprenticeship programs, ensuring a steady pipeline of qualified arborists.

In addition to our apprenticeship programs, the Tree Care Academy®: Career Pathway offers a comprehensive training solution for arboriculture professionals. This program provides structured education and career development through customizable training and an online platform that aligns with ANSI and OSHA standards. It includes a variety of courses and specializations, such as Ground Operations, Tree Climber Specialist, and Aerial Lift Operations, all available in English and Spanish to broaden access. The Career Pathway also allows participants to achieve qualifications, such as Crew Leader Qualification and Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP), offering both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

For more information on this issue,
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Solutions and Suggestions for Congress

To further support workforce development in the tree care industry, TCIA recommends the following actions:

1. **Support Apprenticeship Programs:** Increase funding and resources for apprenticeship programs that provide hands-on training and education in specialized fields, such as arboriculture. This will help attract more workers and provide career pathways for young people, veterans, and career changers.
2. **Expand Access to Training Funds:** Pass the **Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (S. 722 / H.R. 1477)**, which expands the use of 529 savings plans for postsecondary training and credentialing. This bill will provide tax-advantaged resources for individuals pursuing career growth outside traditional academic routes.
3. **Enhance Technical Education:** Invest in partnerships between educational institutions and industry leaders to create programs that focus on skills essential for the tree care industry. Encourage states to integrate technical and vocational training into high school curricula to prepare students for careers in arboriculture.
4. **Incentivize Workforce Development:** Offer tax incentives and grants for companies that invest in employee training and development programs, helping them upskill their workforce and retain talent.

TCIA remains committed to collaborating with Congress and other stakeholders to implement these solutions and ensure the growth and sustainability of the tree care workforce.

Conclusion

Enhancing workforce development is crucial to ensuring the tree care industry's growth and sustainability. By addressing these issues, we can create a stable, skilled workforce that supports the economy, strengthens national security, and meets the evolving needs of the industry. TCIA urges policymakers to consider these reforms as vital components of a prosperous future for all stakeholders involved.