



# Environmental Services Apprenticeship Programs for Electricians and Construction Inspectors

## Building a Diverse and Equitable Water Workforce

The Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) Electrical Apprentice Program and Construction Inspector Program are two innovative staffing programs. They are designed to:

- Cultivate a strong water workforce with specialized technical skills.
- Advance equity by increasing access to stable, high-quality careers for veterans, women, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

MCES provides wastewater services and integrated planning to ensure sustainable water quality and water supply for the Twin Cities metropolitan region.

We aim to be a high-performing water utility with an engaged and innovative workforce that is competent, motivated, and diverse. MCES uses multiple evidence-based strategies to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, skilled workforce that represents the community we serve.

Recruit    Develop    Retain

## Electrical Apprenticeship Program

### Cultivating electricians with specialized experience

Program initiated: 2019 | First hires: 2020



12-month recurring apprenticeships



Apprentice electricians on path to professional journeymen from diverse and underrepresented populations



Key partner: International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW Local 110)



Learn specific electrical needs of wastewater utility. Gain field experience toward 5 years required for state certification exam.

### Challenge: Find electricians with unique problem-solving skills

MCES electricians perform specialized work, spending a good deal of time on electrical instrumentation and troubleshooting motor controls. They need to have analytical minds for problem-solving novel situations, to collaborate with others, and to adapt to various environments like underground spaces and strong odors.

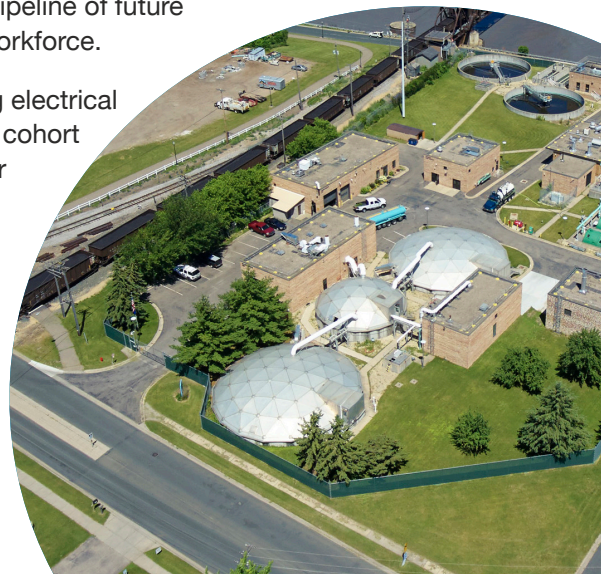
**Solution: The MCES Electrical Apprenticeship Program** was designed by the managers of the Electrical Planning & Maintenance and the Workforce & Equity departments to build a pipeline of future qualified job candidates and to increase diversity of the wastewater utility's workforce.

IBEW selects candidates from underrepresented populations who are seeking electrical apprenticeships, based on qualifications and likelihood of success. The initial cohort of two apprentices participated in the program for six additional months. Their employment was extended at the union's request because the pandemic had reduced job opportunities across the trade.

1 cohort | 2 electrical apprentices

"I got to witness new experiences, network with a ton of great people, and gain confidence in the future of my career."

- Mustafa Shabazz, MCES electrical apprentice, 2020-2021



# Construction Inspector Program

## Training future construction inspectors

Program initiated: 2019 | First hires: anticipated summer 2021



3+ years progressive career path, initiated as positions needed



Key partner: Twin Cities Rise, a workforce development nonprofit



Individuals from diverse and underrepresented populations with aptitude and commitment to grow careers as construction inspectors.



Serve 1 year as construction inspector trainees, then 2+ years as associate construction inspectors until qualifications met to become Construction Inspectors.



### Challenge: Lack of diversity in typical candidate pool and pending need to hire new inspectors

Construction inspectors monitor construction activities to ensure compliance with construction specifications and plans. They work closely with other MCES staff, contractors, and subcontractors. Traditionally, open positions for an MCES construction inspector draw qualified individuals with considerable experience in the construction industry but with limited gender, racial, and ethnic diversity.

**Solution: The MCES Construction Inspector Program** was designed by staff from across MCES and the Council's Human Resources department to replicate the experience and knowledge applicants typically have by creating a progressive career pathway within MCES. Participants are construction inspector trainees for one year, then associate construction inspectors for two or more years as they develop their skills.

Twin Cities Rise recruits and assists with intake of candidates from underrepresented populations. Sessions on emotional intelligence provide participants with tools and techniques to understand emotional reactions so they can improve their awareness and interpersonal interactions. Readiness training covers the construction inspector's role and the basics of field observation reporting. The 2021 final applicant pool includes veterans and individuals of diverse genders, ethnicities, and employment backgrounds. Because of the on-site nature of a construction inspector's work, interviews are being postponed in response to the pandemic.

4 virtual sessions | 27 prospective applications targeted outreach | 15 interested candidates | 11 final applicants

#### About MCES

Every day, MCES collects and treats about 250 million gallons of wastewater from approximately 50% of Minnesota's population. We operate and maintain nine wastewater treatment plants and the regional wastewater collection system. This includes more than 640 miles of regional sanitary sewers that collect wastewater from 110 communities.

Metropolitan Council is the regional policy-making body, planning agency, and provider of essential services for the Twin Cities metropolitan region.

[www.metrocouncil.org/Wastewater-Water.aspx](http://www.metrocouncil.org/Wastewater-Water.aspx)

"This program is especially rewarding because it allows us to not only recruit from a more diverse population but allows us to train future inspectors in the specifics of the job."

- Jim Sailer, MCES manager of Construction Services



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