



Investing in People and Innovation: **How Lowe's and the Lowe's Foundation Are Strengthening America's Skilled Trades Workforce**

MAY 2026

Executive Summary

Lowe's, a leading home improvement retailer, and the Lowe's Foundation are leaders in addressing the national skilled trades gap while driving long-term economic opportunity and workforce resilience. With leadership from the top down, their investments in innovative workforce development strategies and Lowe's associates are helping solve the severe skilled trades labor shortage and fulfill dreams for the next generation of skilled trades professionals. These efforts come at an urgent moment for our country, as evidenced by the skilled labor gap driving a \$10 billion economic loss every year in the U.S. housing industry – just one of many sectors feeling the strain.¹

Key Highlights:

- + **Investing in Innovative Partners:** Since 2023, the Lowe's Foundation has [invested nearly \\$53 million](#) in 65 nonprofits and community colleges to expand and scale skilled trades training models at the local and national levels. These organizations are preparing people for carpentry, construction, HVAC, electrical, plumbing and property maintenance careers.
- + **Fostering a Community of Learning to Maximize Impact:** From in-person convenings to interactive online platforms for grant recipients, the Lowe's Foundation brings its partners together to accelerate the adoption of best practices.
- + **Upskilling Lowe's Associates:** The Lowe's Track to the Trades program is a benefit offered to all Lowe's associates and provides tuition-free education courses for skilled trades certifications. More than 31,000 associates have enrolled in Track to the Trades program since its inception.

Leadership Matters

Lowe's Chairman and CEO Marvin Ellison has made solving the skilled trades labor shortage a strategic priority by driving philanthropic initiatives that invest millions in training, education and career pathways.

"While technology continues to evolve, it cannot replace plumbers, electricians, construction workers, maintenance and repair pros, or other tradespeople. Investing in skilled trades is vital to addressing America's workforce shortage."

— Marvin Ellison, Chairman and CEO of Lowe's

Driven by a commitment to foster meaningful careers for skilled trade professionals, Ellison has championed workforce development across Lowe's, driving buy-in throughout the company to advocate for the next generation of tradespeople.

This commitment extends to the Lowe's Foundation board, a cross-functional group of Lowe's executives who ensure the Foundation delivers on its mission. The board is chaired by Lowe's Executive Vice President of Human Resources Janice Dupré and is actively engaged in the grantmaking process and grant recipient experience.

Investing in Innovative Partners

Through its flagship effort, the Gable Grants program, the Lowe's Foundation funds community and technical colleges, community-based organizations and national nonprofits to advance its commitment to train and develop 250,000 tradespeople by 2035 through a \$250 million investment. Focused on innovative strategies and building infrastructure, the program helps partners expand training capacity, modernize facilities, incorporate work-based learning practices and increase access to high-quality skilled trades education nationwide.

The Foundation has awarded nearly \$53 million Gable Grants to 65 organizations across 27 states.

Highlights include:

- + **West Virginia Women Work** used its grant [to transform an abandoned schoolhouse](#) into a permanent home for its Step Up for Women in Construction & Manufacturing Program, which offers training in welding, carpentry and electrical work. The renovation was completed by pre-apprenticeship participants and is serving as a launchpad to place more women into skilled trades careers.
- + **SkillsUSA** celebrated its largest National Signing Day in May 2026 with 5,700 students saying "yes" to skilled trades careers. The Lowe's Foundation rolled out blue carpets to honor these students at five Lowe's stores alongside their families and future employers.
- + **Valencia College in Orlando** is using its grant [to help people like Yve Servius](#). Yve was living in his car before a friend's family took him in and exposed him to the skilled trades. Inspired by his friend's dad's career in the trades, Yve went through Valencia College's new plumbing program. He received three job offers upon graduation and is now housed and employed with Paramount Plumbing.

"Collectively, we are writing a comeback story for the skilled trades industry. Through our Gable Grants network, these organizations are helping one another effectively recruit, train and employ the people America needs to revitalize our infrastructure."

— Janice Dupré, Executive Vice President of Human Resources of Lowe's and President and Chair of the Lowe's Foundation Board

Bringing Partners Together to Maximize Impact

Beyond funding, the Lowe's Foundation fosters a community of learning with its grant recipients to accelerate the adoption of best workforce development practices. This shared learning comes to life through in-person convenings like the [Gable Grants "G2" Summit](#), a two-day immersion that offered grant recipients an opportunity to learn best practices from peers, solve shared problems and build deeper alignment with the mission of the Gable Grants program. The summit focused on three main learning objectives: addressing barriers to implementing skilled trades training programs, fostering connection and shared learning, and building collective momentum.

Additionally, grant recipients from across the country stay connected through a digital platform to share challenges, training insights and success stories. This enables the Lowe's Foundation to share collective strategic priorities and industry insights while providing grant recipients with inspiration to best serve aspiring tradespeople.

Upskilling and Associate Development: Track to the Trades

In addition to its philanthropic efforts, Lowe's is opening doors for employees to step into high-demand skilled trades without the burden of tuition. Through its pre-apprenticeship [Track to the Trades](#) program, Lowe's associates gain access to industry-recognized certifications in seven trades where talent is in short supply, including electrical, multi-family housing, residential construction, appliance repair, plumbing, HVAC and utility maintenance.

Over [31,000 Lowe's associates](#) have received hands-on training with expert mentoring through the workforce development program since 2022. The program equips participants with the practical skills and qualifications to build lasting careers while also helping communities address pressing labor shortages that impact the broader U.S. economy.

"In the beginning, my curiosity in the Track to the Trades program was strictly personal. I figured I could learn something useful in the aspect of DIY, but I have learned so much more. After 25 years with Lowe's, my confidence in serving the customer in various areas of the store with just product knowledge has greatly improved."

— Charles W., Merchandising Service Associate at Lowe's

By investing in its workforce, Lowe's is turning essential work into meaningful career pathways, strengthening both its internal talent pool and the skilled trades ecosystem nationwide.

Recommendations for Businesses

The journey of Lowe's and the Lowe's Foundation offers valuable lessons for other companies seeking to address the skilled trades labor shortage and ensure America's long-term economic resilience:

- + Invest in Innovation:** Investments in innovative approaches to workforce development allow nonprofits and community colleges to stay responsive to employer and student needs. These strategies create opportunities to address critical challenges — like accessibility and adapting to new technology — while also building capacity for long-term growth. Supporting new programs allows organizations to demonstrate measurable impact, which strengthens sustainability and attracts future investment.

- + **Forge Local Partnerships:** Selecting the right partnerships is critical to building strong workforce pipelines and supporting entrepreneurship. Community-based nonprofits and community and technical colleges understand local needs, are adept at reducing barriers, and have a proven track record in training and recruitment. Their strong employer relationships make them powerful allies in transforming individuals and communities.
- + **Create Employee Upskilling Pathways:** Programs like Track to the Trades build employee loyalty and engagement, strengthen retention, and directly address industry skills gaps.
- + **Incorporate Workforce Development Into Corporate Strategy:** The combination of buy-in from corporate leadership, philanthropy and program design is the best way to achieve sustainable workforce solutions. A company-wide effort to advocate for the skilled trades workforce is good for business and communities across the country.

Endnotes

1. National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB), HBI Report Reveals Economic Impact of Labor Shortages on Housing Production (Oct. 10, 2025), <https://www.nahb.org/blog/2025/10/hbi-labor-market-report>; The Home Builders Institute Construction Labor Market Report (Fall 2025).

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