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President's message: Big "bump" expected this spring

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It feels like spring has finally arrived in New England, which means a seasonal "bump" in construction projects. This year, the bump promises to be bigger than usual. After being among the sectors hardest hit by the Great Recession, studies are now showing that construction is among the nation's fastest-growing industries.

With new work comes the need for more workers. ABC's Merit Apprenticeship Program (MAP) provides a way for you to solve your labor problems at the same time as you help the open shop compete on a level playing field.

MAP provides companies with an opportunity to augment their hiring process and find qualified candidates from the program's nine labor pools located across the Commonwealth and in southern New Hampshire. MAP can free human resource personnel or owners from much of the bureaucratic maze of paperwork, thus allowing them to focus on other important responsibilities.

MAP also provides member companies with the opportunity to bid on virtually any public sector prevailing wage job - be it federal, state, local or out-of-state - because the program is registered with the Department of Workforce Development's Division of Apprentice Standards.

And MAP, like its member companies, is gearing up for the increase in labor demand. Each spring we bring in new candidates such as vocational school graduates and veterans to replenish our regional labor pools. We also send "to the minors," those candidates who have not responded to job requests or are not reachable due to changes in phone or email addresses.

If you are part of a construction firm's management team, I urge you to talk to member companies and see how you as an individual contractor can be part of the largest registered merit group program in Massachusetts without losing control of your company or your labor force.

Don't worry if you are trying to build up a backlog of work before you request new employee candidates; MAP candidates are available all year round. MAP can also help to keep you in compliance if you're working on jobs in which it's important to hire minorities, women or residents of a specific city.

If you want more information on MAP, how to join or how to access our labor pools, please go to our website: www.meritapprentice.org, call ABC MA at 781-273-0123 or email our director of workforce development standards and compliance John Rich john@abcma.org.

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