



## Skilled to Build Michigan Newsletter

2025 Successes, 2026 Goals and Opportunities

Happy New Year!

To say it has been a minute since you have heard from the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation would be an understatement. While we may have been radio silent in communicating with you, it does not mean we have not been busy cultivating, educating, and working to recruit individuals into the residential construction industry.

The Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization connected to the Home Builders Association of Michigan. Our mission is to cultivate, educate, and recruit students, veterans, and returning citizens by building awareness and creating career opportunities in the residential construction industry, and last year we were busy doing just that.

Our resolution for 2026 is to connect those interested in a career in residential construction with employers willing to hire students, veterans, and returning citizens.

Let's get into it by starting with students. In 2020, the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation partnered with legislators and members of the Home Builders Association of Michigan for March Is Reading Month. While COVID-19 brought us to a standstill, we were still able to get into schools and read *Billy the Builder Bear Builds a House*. Legislators and HBA members were provided with the book to read, and thanks to the generous donations of many individuals, we were able to print thousands of copies so each child in those classrooms could be gifted a book.

We are again partnering with legislators and members in 2026 for March Is Reading Month, but this year, in addition to providing *Billy the Builder Bear Builds a House*, we will also provide copies of *Catie Leads the Crew*. As in 2020, those who read will be able to leave books with students in the classroom.

This initiative aligns well with the new focus by Governor Whitmer and the Legislature on third-grade literacy. In March, the focus will be on students in grades K-3. As books are limited, they will be provided on a first-request basis. Each legislator will receive a copy of each book to review the

content and determine whether they would like to partner with us. The goal is to have all orders completed and picked up by the last week of February.

The Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation also works to educate students in 8-12 grade about opportunities in the residential construction industry. In FY 2023, the state of Michigan provided us with a \$2 million line item in the Department of Education (MDE) budget. This funding allowed us to print and *distribute Build Your Future: The Complete Guide to a Skilled Trades Career*. This book was distributed to every student in grades 8-12 in the public school system.

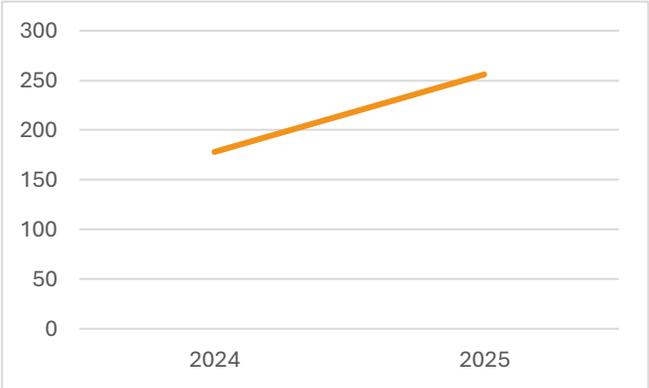
That same year, Skilled to Build Michigan was asked by the Career and Technical Education division within MDE to create a recognized certificate for residential construction students enrolled in construction trades programs. In the first year, we learned a great deal, and through that process, we certified 69 students. Many thanks to those who responded to our request to support this program.

We switched platforms in the 2024 school year, and the success of our partnership with ICEV is already evident (as seen in the graph below). Many thanks to the Alabama HBA for allowing us to use their curriculum and online platform.



### STUDENTS CERTIFIED UNDER CREDENTIAL PROGRAM

<b>2024</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>2025</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>



We currently have 17 schools around the state of Michigan using our certification program, and with ICEV’s work, we expect that number to increase in the future.

The next step is connecting those students who are certified with employers who would hire a student. **If you are interested in hiring a student, please click here and fill out the form so we can connect you with students.**

As students receive their certification, they receive a congratulatory note from Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation. Included in that note is a QR code for students to upload their resumes and cover letters.

We were fortunate in FY 25 to receive grant funding from the state of Michigan. This funding was used to distribute the book, *Trades Today*, to students in 8th grade across the state.

Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation is attending the Michigan Construction Teachers Association (MCTA) conference in February. The goal is to continue to build relationships with the instructors and to educate them about the benefits of using our certification.

In addition to connecting students with employers, we were fortunate to receive funding from the Charitable and Education Foundation (HBA of Southeast MI) and from the Michigan Propane Gas Association. These funds will be used to provide students who receive our certification and secure employment with a starter kit of basic tools to help them get started.

Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation was busy in 2025 building a strong foundation with students and educators.

We realize the need to build our workforce TODAY, I mean, look at the number of licenses in each age category in the state of Michigan. And don't only look at the total, look at the average age of a builder in our state.

### LICENSED BUILDER AGE DATA

TOTAL MICHIGAN BUILDERS

AGE RANGE	NUMBER OF BUILDERS IN RANGE
18-25	469
26-34	1,920
35-45	6,841
46-55	9,390
56-65	12,394
66+	11,192

**AVERAGE AGE: 56.42    MEDIAN AGE: 58**

While cultivating students is critical, we also need boots on the ground today. So, when there is a problem, the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation works to solve it. That is why we wrote a book specifically for veterans in the state of Michigan. The *Veterans Guidebook to Residential Building*:

*Open the Door to Your Future and Build Something Great* examines each branch of the military and connects military service to careers in the skilled trades.

We were able to take this project from concept to reality with the support of the Home Builders Association Foundation (connected with the HBA of Greater Grand Rapids), the HBA Charitable & Education Foundation (HBA of Southeastern MI), and the Michigan Propane Gas Association.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there are approximately 48,492 veterans under the age of 40 residing in Michigan. The VA also projects that 151,342 veterans between the ages of 40 and 64 live in the state. Take another look at those age ranges. This is the population we must engage to build our workforce today.

Just as we partner with members of the Legislature for March Is Reading Month, we are also partnering with members of the Veterans Caucus to distribute the 9,000 books we have available. Each book will include a notecard with a QR code that allows veterans to upload their résumés and cover letters. The goal is to connect veterans with employers willing to hire them. **If you are interested in receiving veteran résumés, please click here.**

If you host veteran-focused events in your area and would like the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation to attend with books, please email Dawn at [skilledtobuildmichigan@gmail.com](mailto:skilledtobuildmichigan@gmail.com) with the event details and we will do our best to be there.

The final group we are working to support is returning citizens. These individuals have participated in the Michigan Department of Corrections Vocational Village program and have received training in a variety of areas, including building trades, 3D printing and robotics, CDL, carpentry, CNC/robotics, welding, concrete and masonry, line clearance/tree trimming, and warehouse/forklift operations.

On a regular basis, the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation receives names, resumes, availability dates, and county-of-return information for these individuals. We will provide resumes and contact information to employers who are interested in giving someone a second chance to build a life and a career. **If you are interested in receiving resumes from returning citizens, please sign up here.**

Are YOU hiring? In the past, Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation sent an email out every month to see if you are hiring. We would then compile that information and share it with individuals interested in a career in residential construction, as well as those who assist job seekers. It's been a minute since we last reached out. As mentioned, we have clear goals for 2026, and getting that email and the "I'm Hiring" directory back online is one of them. There's no time like the present, so

if you have one or more open positions, please complete this very simple **Google form** by the end of the month so we can distribute it during the first week of February.

### **Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation is HIRING.**

As you can see, we have been busy, and while I enjoy working with the Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation board and the connections and coalitions we have created, if we are going to continue to grow, we need to hire an Executive Director who can dedicate the time needed to take us to the next level.

We are fortunate to have a generous donor who is willing to fund a part-time Executive Director position for two years. The goal is for this individual to work closely with our board to grow the organization. If you are interested, or know someone who may be a good fit, please contact Dawn at [skilledtobuildmichigan@gmail.com](mailto:skilledtobuildmichigan@gmail.com)

The individual will have experience working with nonprofit organizations and boards of directors. As noted, this is a part-time hybrid position. A key responsibility of the role will be to build relationships and establish a donor base that will allow the position and programs to continue beyond the initial two years of funding.

And of course, it would not be a communication from me without a request for **support**. While funding has been secured for the part-time Executive Director, continued growth still requires additional resources.

If you are at the age where you must take a required minimum distribution, please keep Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation in mind. To accommodate our funder to hire an executive director, we have also set up an account that can accept stocks if you would like to donate that way.

As always, should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Here's to a prosperous 2026!

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Skilled to Build Michigan Foundation  
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