FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TradesFutures Receives $1 Million Grant from Ascendium Education Group to Advance National Apprenticeship Readiness Standards and Expand Access to Career Pathways

Washington, D.C. - *November 19th, 2026* -TradesFutures is pleased to announce a $1 million investment from Ascendium to support the *Transforming Access to High-Quality Apprenticeships Pilot Initiative*, aimed at strengthening the quality, consistency and impact of apprenticeship readiness programs (ARPs) across the country.

Building on TradesFutures' existing network of Apprenticeship Readiness Programs across 34 states, the initiative will identify, formalize and evaluate high-quality, equity-centered practices that improve program completion, placement and long-term career opportunities in the union construction industry.

“This investment represents an important opportunity to build on what we’ve learned from Apprenticeship Readiness Programs across the country and translate those insights into actionable standards that strengthen the entire field,” said Marina Zhavoronkova, Executive Director of TradesFutures. “By identifying what works, supporting local implementation, and evaluating outcomes, we can help more individuals successfully transition into Registered Apprenticeships and family-sustaining careers in the skilled trades.”

Strengthening Apprenticeship Readiness Nationwide

Building on its national network of Apprenticeship Readiness Programs across 34 states, TradesFutures will use the funding to support implementation of national quality standards informed by research, program outcomes, and insights from local partners.

The funding will support technical assistance, program evaluation, and opportunities for selected local programs to implement and test promising practices. Findings will contribute to a national library of best practices and policy recommendations designed to

improve program completion, strengthen placement outcomes, and facilitate transitions into Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Through this work, TradesFutures aims to establish a scalable model for improving apprenticeship readiness nationwide, equipping programs with the tools and resources needed to connect more individuals to family-sustaining careers in the union construction industry.

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About TradesFutures: TradesFutures is a leading national non-profit organization dedicated to expanding pathways into union Registered Apprenticeships and family-sustaining construction careers. Our network of more than 200 Apprenticeship Readiness Programs works across 32+ states, teaches the award-winning Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), and removes barriers to opportunity. Through proven strategies, programs, and partnerships, TradesFutures connects workers to quality careers while helping meet the evolving workforce needs of the union construction industry. To learn more, visit tradesfutures.org.

About Ascendium Education Group: Ascendium Education Group® is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization driven by the belief that learning after high school gives people the power to build better futures. Our national philanthropy focuses on increasing opportunities for learners from low-income backgrounds to achieve upward mobility through postsecondary education and workforce training. We partner with organizations whose objectives align with our core strategies to expand opportunity, support learner success, and connect and align systems. Our grantees include postsecondary education and workforce training providers, intermediaries, researchers, and media organizations from across the U.S. To learn more, visit ascendiumphilanthropy.org.