

Partnering with Organized Labor to Build Career Pathways: *Lessons Learned from an Innovative Grant Program*

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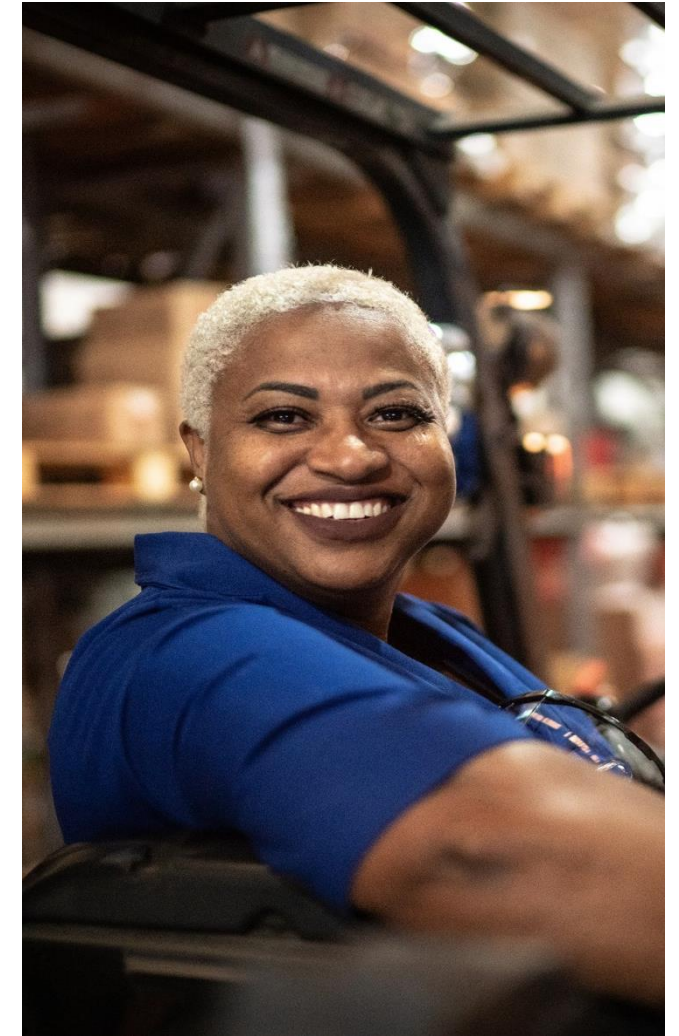
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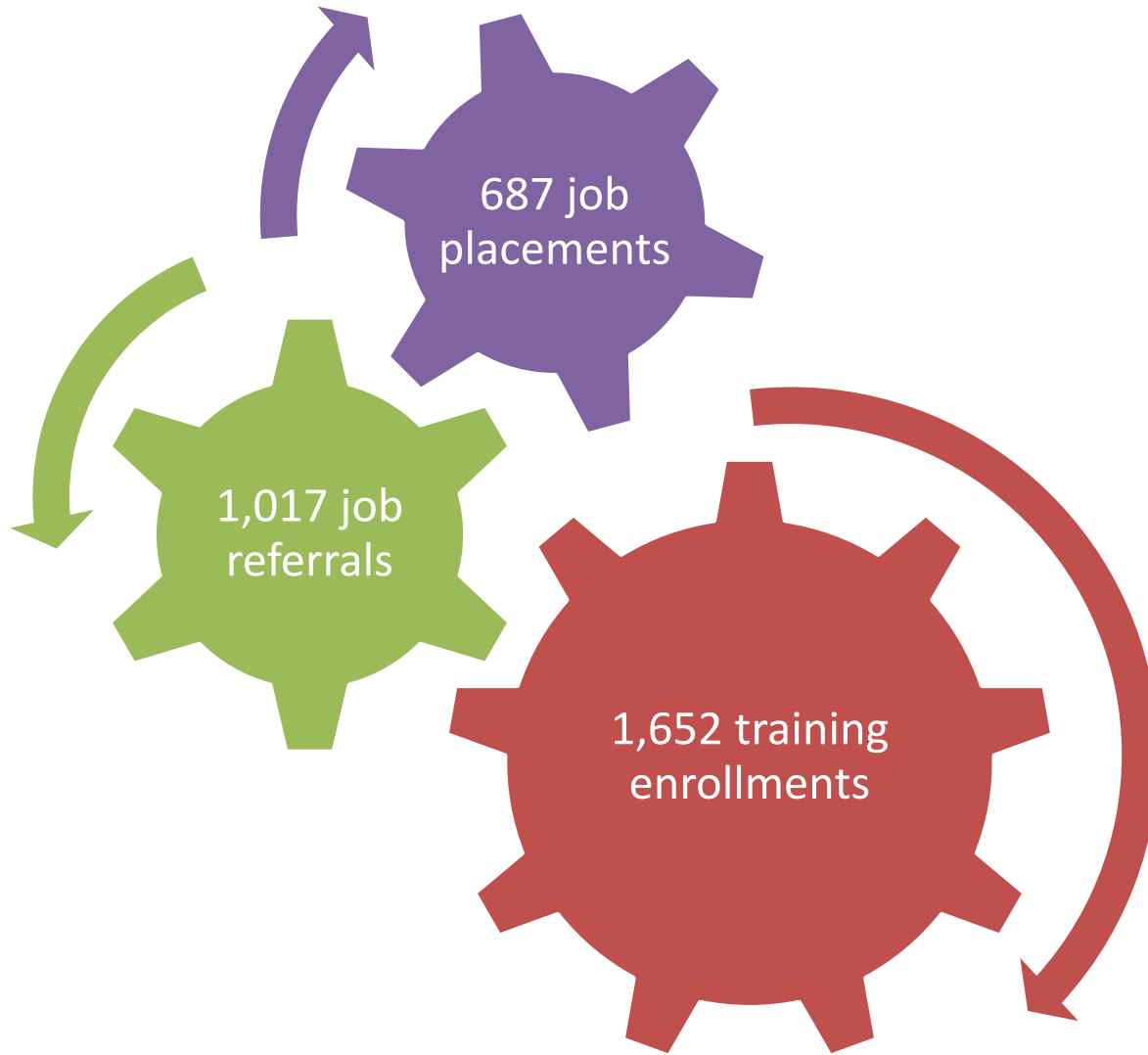


INTRODUCING PINCC

The “Pathways to Industrial and Construction Careers” (PINCC) Program is...

- Funded via a three-year \$18.6 million Good Jobs Challenge grant from the U.S Economic Development Administration; *one year no-cost extension granted through 9/30/2026.*
- Designed to promote career opportunities in the construction, transportation, and industrial industries for low-income and disadvantaged New Yorkers.
- Focused on sector-based occupational training, education, and job placements, along with wraparound support and navigation services.
- Led by the Career Services team at the NYC Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration (HRA) in partnership with multiple City agencies, unions, and CBOs.





As of July 2025, PINCC has engaged more than 1,600 New Yorkers in training and placed almost 700 in jobs.

Union partnerships were built into PINCC from the beginning but became increasingly engaged over past year.

Lead/Backbone Agencies

- HRA Career Services
- NYC Talent
- NYC Central Labor Council Consortium for Workforce Development

Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

- Rebuilding Together
- Non-Traditional Employment for Women (NEW)
- Pathways to Apprenticeship

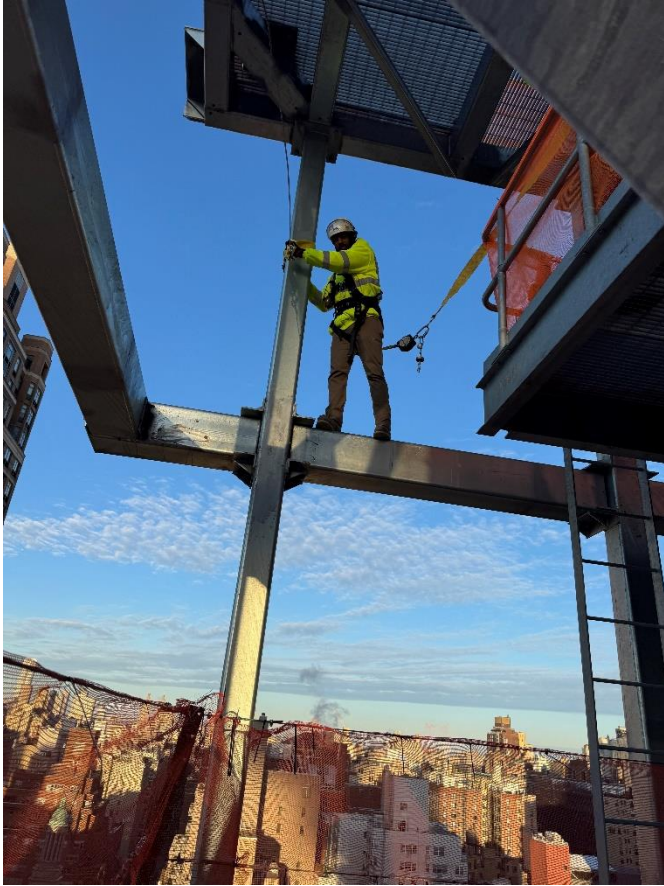
Select Union Partners

- Local 79 (Laborers)
- DC 9 (Painters)
- Local 28 (Sheet Metal)
- Local 3 (Electrical)
- Locals 1 & 7 (Bricklayers)

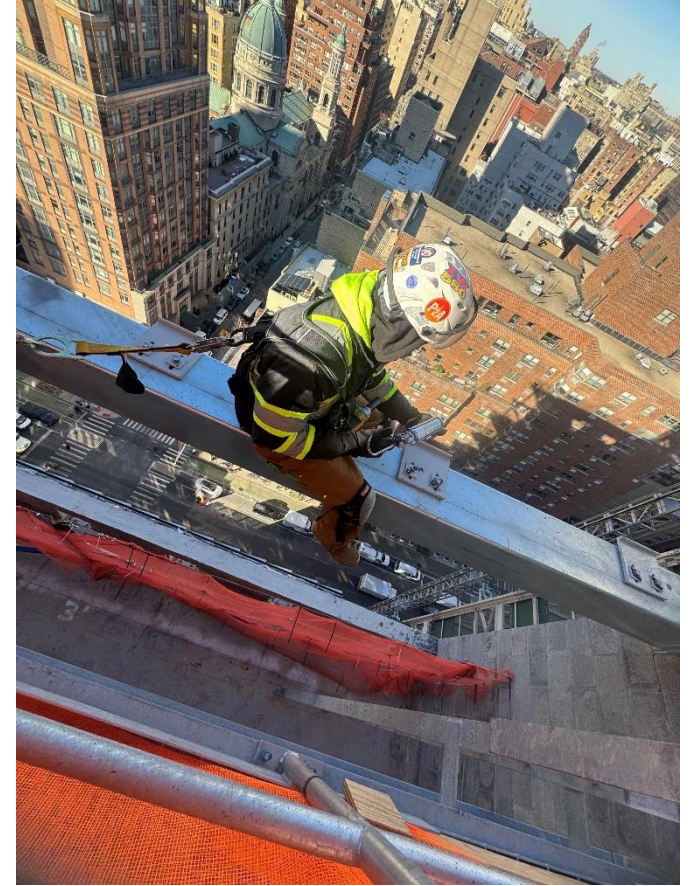
Shifting policy context led to changes in program model with more intentional focus on training and employment retention.

- Slow return to mandatory engagement for cash assistance clients → broader eligibility criteria to boost enrollment, but implications for braided funding to support wraparound services.
- Changes in federal policy with implications for NYC regional economy (e.g., pause on offshore wind permitting) → slowdown in targeted industries.
 - ➔ *“Reverse recruitment” strategy focuses on providing wraparound supports to low-income individuals already enrolled in training/newly employed, including union apprentices.*
- Supportive services include MetroCards, drivers license / fingerprinting fees, tool sets, financial counseling, and employment supports (i.e., interview prep and resume assistance).

A PINCC Success Story



Barry W. was referred to PINCC in June 2024 by community partner Pathways to Apprenticeship (P2A) after enrolling in their pre-apprenticeship direct entry training program for the construction trades. PINCC provided Barry with wraparound supports to enhance his employability, including Class D driver's education and transportation assistance. After completing training with P2A, Barry was accepted as an apprentice by Ironworkers Local 580 and is now working as a structural ironworker helping to define the NYC skyline.



WORKFORCE COLLABORATION BETWEEN ORGANIZED LABOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

Insights from staff and participants

The PINCC evaluation is led by the DSS Office of Evaluation and Research (OER).

- Growing acknowledgement of organized labor's importance for high-skills workforce development, but unions typically operate outside public workforce systems → opportunity to identify promising practices for collaboration.
 - 20% of NYC's labor force is unionized, double the national rate.
- Key evaluation questions focused on program model and participant experiences.
- Primary data collected April – June 2025.
 - Semi-structured key informant interviews with 9 staff from 6 organizations, including PINCC backbone agencies, service providers, pre-apprenticeship / unions.
 - Structured participant survey link sent to ~8,000 email addresses from PINCC portal and available as QR code at select info sessions: 582 responses (7% response rate)

LESSONS FROM PROGRAM PARTNERS

Unions offer a pathway for family-sustaining jobs but can be challenging for low-income populations to access due to lack of information, union-specific eligibility requirements, and weak integration with the public workforce development system.

“Many people are not finding union opportunities, and they felt they don’t have access to union positions, including providing support and engagement. And bringing that to the table is really important, especially for small organizations like us.”

- *Pre-apprenticeship program*

“If you don’t have certifications you go to the bottom of the list [for union membership] – they are expensive and time-consuming. A lot [of unions] have an aptitude test, recruitment periods vary, some require a driver’s license or have a residency requirement.”

- *Pre-apprenticeship program*

“For some of the unions you can come in with little to no experience, can work your way from the ground up. In 2025 that doesn’t happen too much.”

- *PINCC Staff*

Building engagement with organized labor often requires creating new networks between public agencies and unions. Seeking out trusted partners and emphasizing concrete benefits for members are key.

“Our past leadership had a great relationship because they themselves had been a union member.”

- *Pre-apprenticeship program*

“I had my sales hat on...I got through when I said we were able to buy apprentices’ toolkits that cost \$360, now they talk about how great PINCC is.”

- *PINCC staff*

“You really need to get to know someone in the union, sell benefit of this program to their members. Get to the point, tell them how this will help the members.”

- *Backbone organization*

“Key partners [at unions] are the training directors...we’ve approached the presidents but they’re so high up they don’t see the day-to-day struggles of people in the class.”

- *PINCC staff*

Wraparound services—e.g., transportation, financial counseling—can serve as critical retention tools and boost provider capacity.

“PINCC complements [our supports] by covering the transportation and lets us allocate funding elsewhere – for food or graduation expenses that may come up for our participants.”
- *Pre-apprenticeship program*

“One of the things I’m really excited about is the partnership we have with Local 3 where we buy tools. Thinking of what it takes to support people in their trade journey – like people who go to college need books.” - *PINCC staff*

“We have a 3-week unpaid training, they have to be here, it’s a sacrifice...Before I would get a lot of calls saying I can’t get to work, now I don’t get that. I think they notice they get that helping hand, keeps them going for a couple for a weeks. The financial training helps, a lot of them have been reaching out about how to create a budget, helping them learn why and how to fix their credit.” - *Union partner*

“[PINCC] will provide MetroCards to sustain especially during the first month of the job, that’s a critical time period...financial coaching, that’s critical because people need to learn how to budget the little money they have, manage debt...you get a job and have your permit but not your license, will provide driving lessons.”
- *Backbone organization*

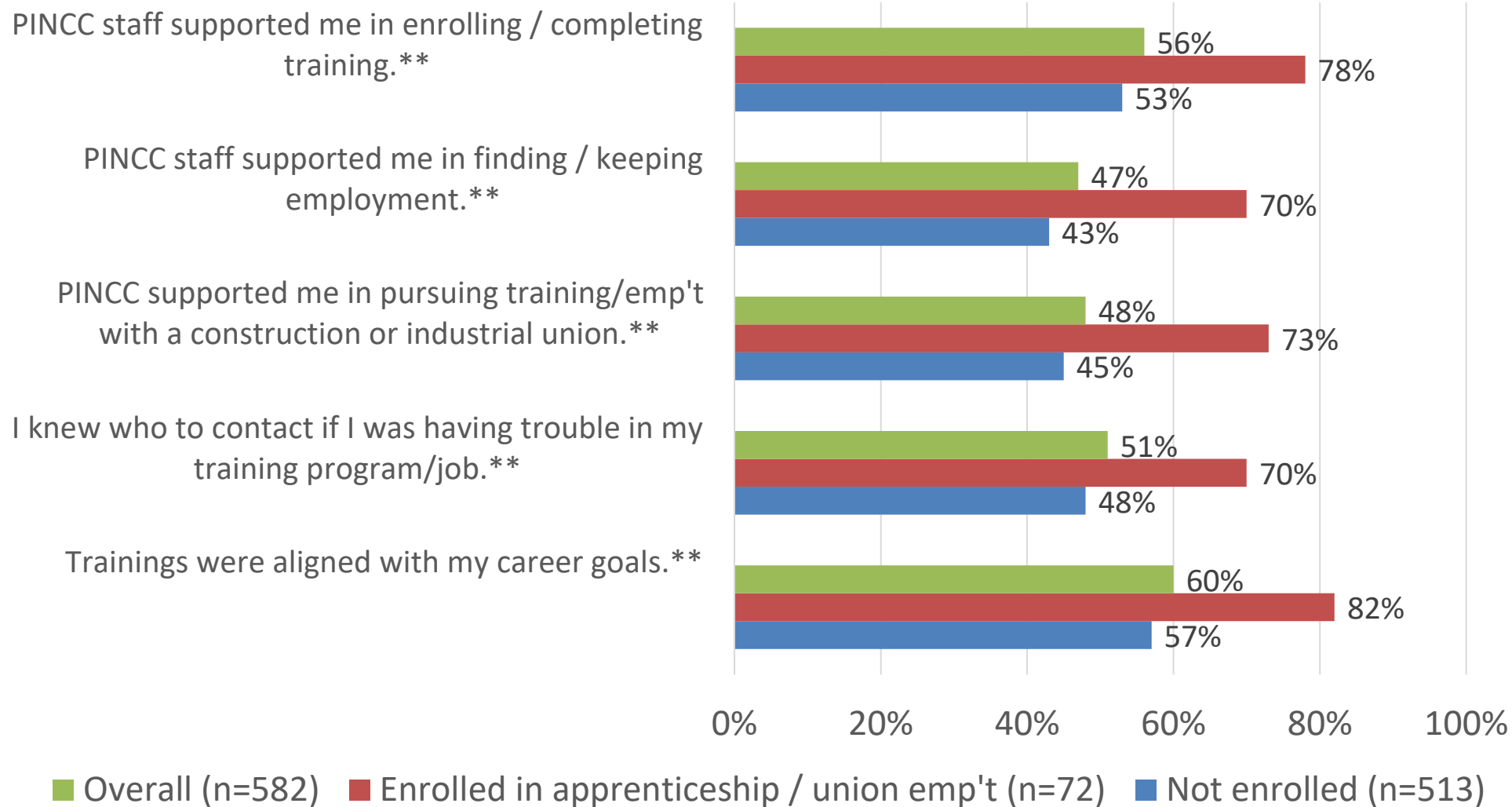
Union-government partnerships may require flexible models for programming, contracting, and reporting.

“Some of the unions don’t have a dedicated person to do [reporting] so while you might have a relationship with the person in charge of training, the data that they collect might not be transcribed in a way that we can use... unions have their own priorities. We can have everything else—we can have their blood type—but we can’t report [the placement] if we don’t have their job start date.”
- PINCC staff

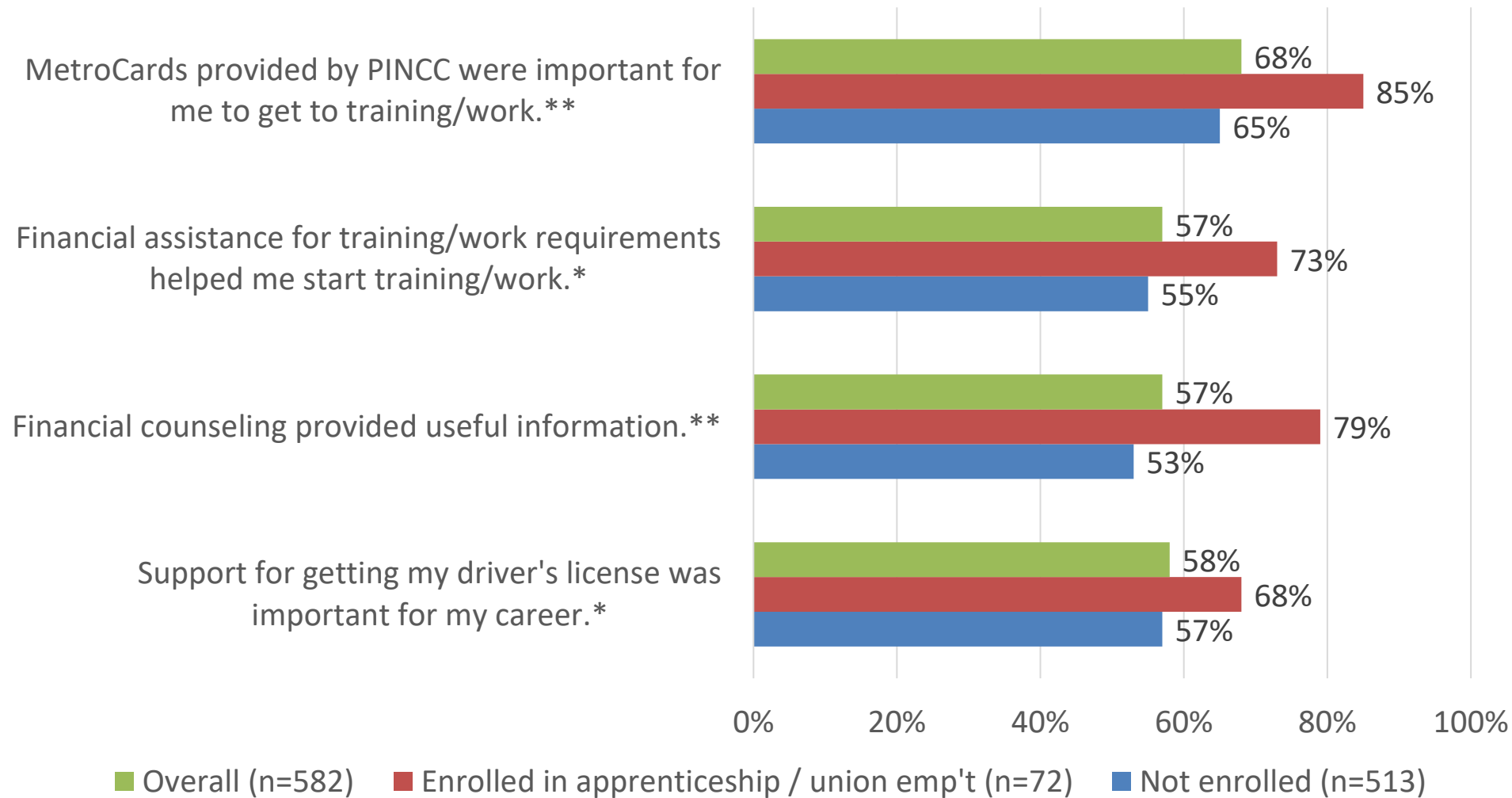
“We went from trying to make direct referrals [for apprenticeship programs] to reverse recruitment, now we’ve gained their trust so they’re asking for direct referrals.”
- PINCC staff

“Our backbone organizations play a huge role. They help us accomplish things we can’t do on the government side.” - PINCC staff

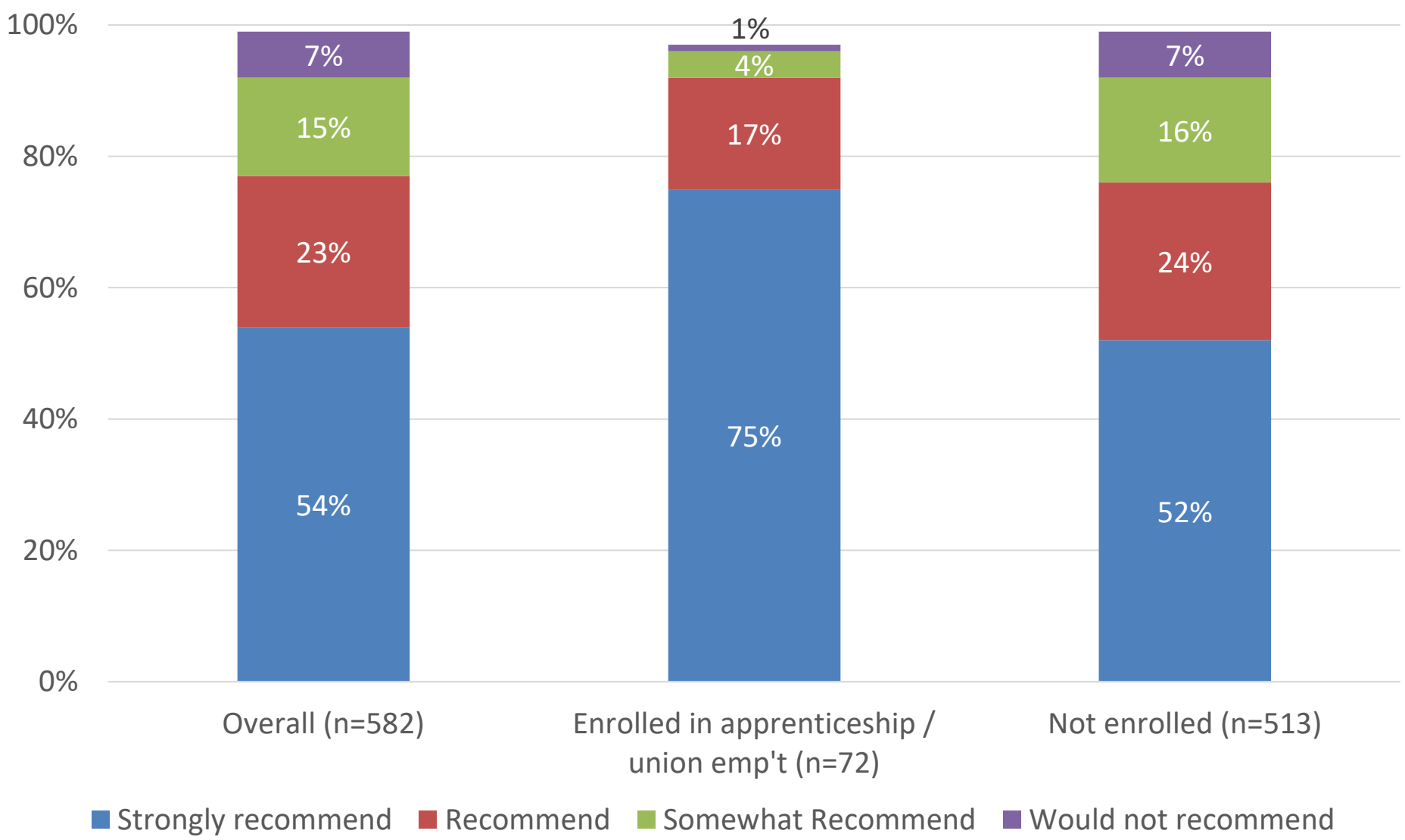
PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



- Overall, ~50% of survey respondents agreed that training and staff support provided by PINCC were helpful.
- While numbers are small, satisfaction was far higher (70%+) among those who reported affiliation with a union.



- Respondents overall valued wrap-around supports provided by PINCC – especially transportation support.
- Those affiliated with unions were significantly more likely to strongly agree these were important / useful.



Almost all survey respondents would recommend PINCC, but those affiliated with unions were substantially and significantly more likely to strongly recommend the program ($p < .01$).

20% of respondents provided open-ended comments; of those, the majority (56%) highlighted PINCC's helpful staff, concrete supports, and useful services.

Helpful staff

- Staff I have interacted with were great.*
- Great experience welcoming staff and open communication.
- I wanna thank PINCC for all the help and support I appreciate everyone who help and guided me through.

Concrete supports

- A very helpful program especially for someone making a career change and trying to afford to do so in a very expensive city.*
- Great experience with helping get to work with MetroCards especially with me just starting my apprenticeship*
- It's been a pleasure for me who have know this program had help me a lot with MetroCards and also getting my license.*

Useful services

- It was an amazing program I learned a lot I got a lot of stuff certificate that I never thought I was going to get, and I am so proud myself why I accomplish and thank you for being PINCC.*
- I'm very thankful for the help with my resume that opened doors to a variety of maintenance jobs.
- Keep doing those PINCC job fair it's very useful.*
- Very helpful in providing information for financial services and employment.

Just under half (44%) of open-ended responses cited challenges such as lack of communication and misalignment of services with participant needs/goals.
None of these were from respondents affiliated with union programs.

Lack of
communication

- I have tried to reach out but never get a response besides the automated message.
- I have yet to get notified of a training coming up.
- I signed up and I never received a call or email concerning any information about starting the program.

Misalignment
of services

- I wish that the PINCC program had more opportunities that didn't require a GED.
- Another reason I wasn't able to obtain all the benefits of the program is because all the courses were too far. Only held in the Bronx or Manhattan.
- I couldn't go to the program because I was working at the same time.
- I enrolled in the dockhand training program which was over 20 classes over 2 to 3 months. I wish I could have completed the program, but the classes were far away and there were so many classes that interfered with my schedule. I can't afford to not work for months while attending these classes.

Key Takeaways

- Organized labor is often siloed, and collaboration may require extensive personal outreach and connections through trusted partners.
- “Reverse recruitment” built trust with unions and targeted PINCC services efficiently, and served as a bridge towards greater collaboration.
 - High program satisfaction among union participants *and* substantial progress towards project goals.
- PINCC’s wraparound services, especially concrete supports, are highly valued by providers and participants, suggesting this can be a key role for government in future collaborations.

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