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Fall/Winter
2026

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THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

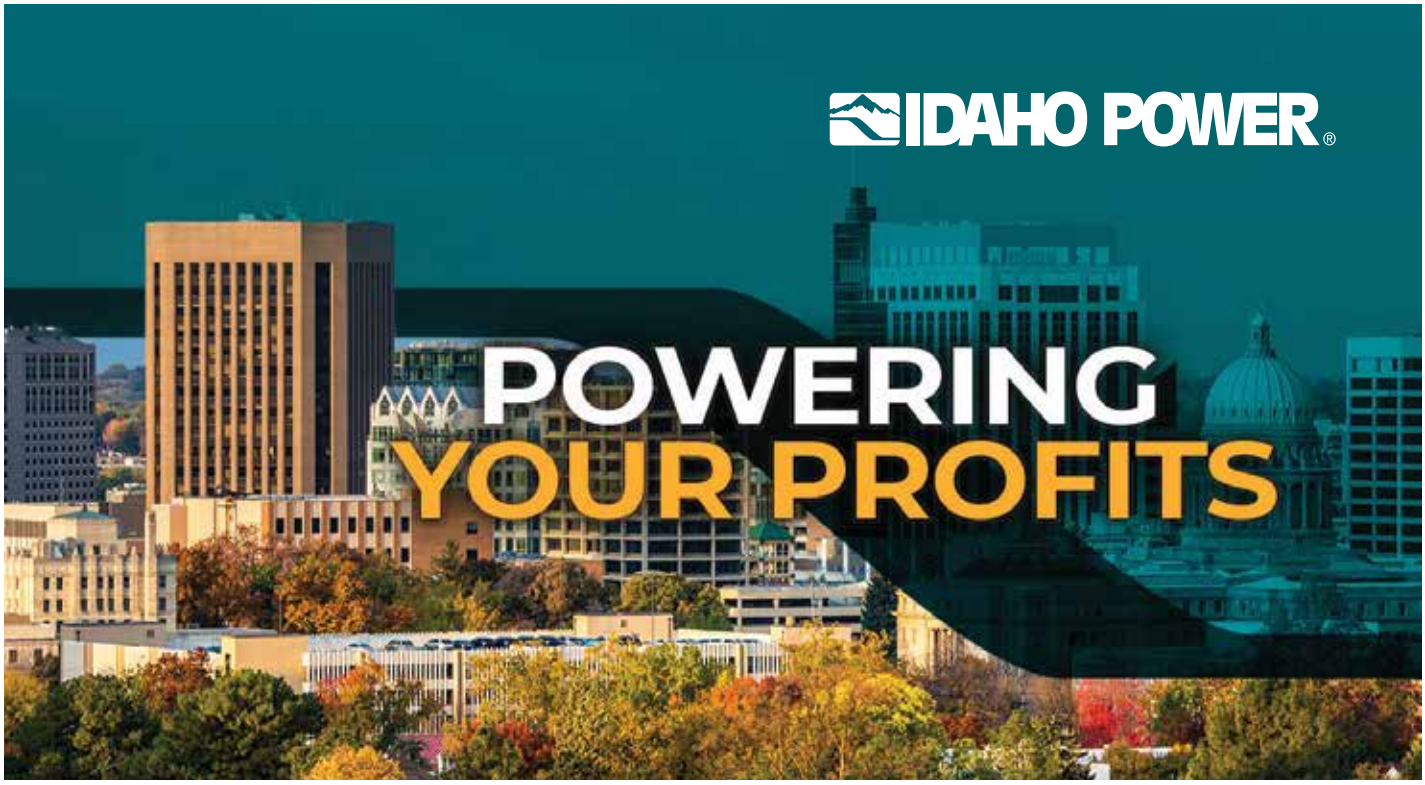
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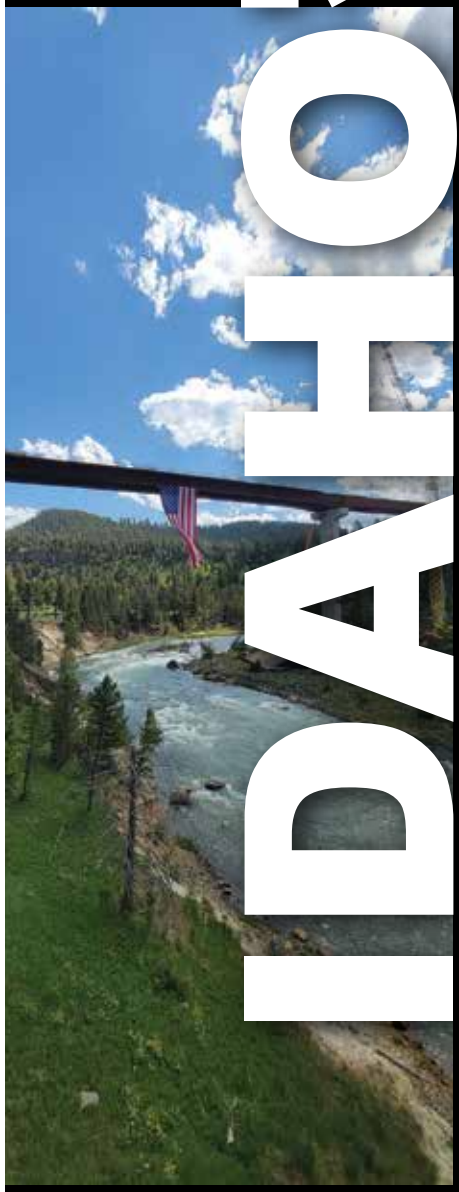
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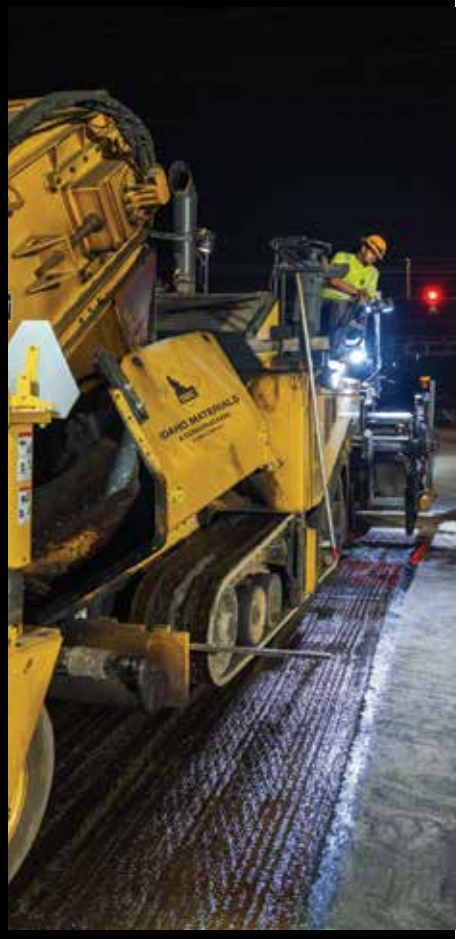
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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO OF THE IDAHO AGC
WAYNE HAMMON

IDAHO AGC
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One of the great privileges of leading a team here at the Idaho AGC is getting to see, every day, the quality of the people who make this organization work.

We have an extraordinary team in place.

They are advocates, problem-solvers, event planners, relationship builders, communicators, educators, and trusted resources for our members. More importantly, they are people who genuinely care about Idaho's construction industry and the companies and individuals who make it successful.

As our association has grown, we have worked hard to make sure that growth never comes at the expense of the personal relationships that have always made the Idaho AGC special. In fact, one of our biggest priorities today is doing just the opposite: finding new and better ways to connect with each of our members at a more meaningful, personal level.

With hundreds of member companies spread across the state, that takes intentional effort. It means getting out of the office and visiting jobsites and member businesses. It means picking up the phone instead of simply sending another email. It means understanding the challenges facing a specialty contractor in Idaho Falls may be very different from those facing a general contractor in Boise or a supplier in Coeur d'Alene.

Most importantly, it means listening.

We want to know what is happening in your company, what challenges you are facing, where opportunities exist, and how your AGC can be more valuable to you.

Sometimes the answer may be advocacy. Sometimes it may be workforce development, training, networking, or simply making the right introduction. Whatever the need, our goal is for every member to know there is someone on the Idaho AGC team ready to help.

That personal connection matters because the AGC is more than an organization you belong to. At its best, it is a network of people working together to make one another—and our entire industry—stronger.

So, when someone from the Idaho AGC reaches out, I hope you'll take the call. Invite us to visit. Tell us what is working and what isn't. Introduce us to someone in your company we should know.

And never hesitate to reach out to us first.

The Idaho AGC is your association. Our job is to make sure it feels that way.





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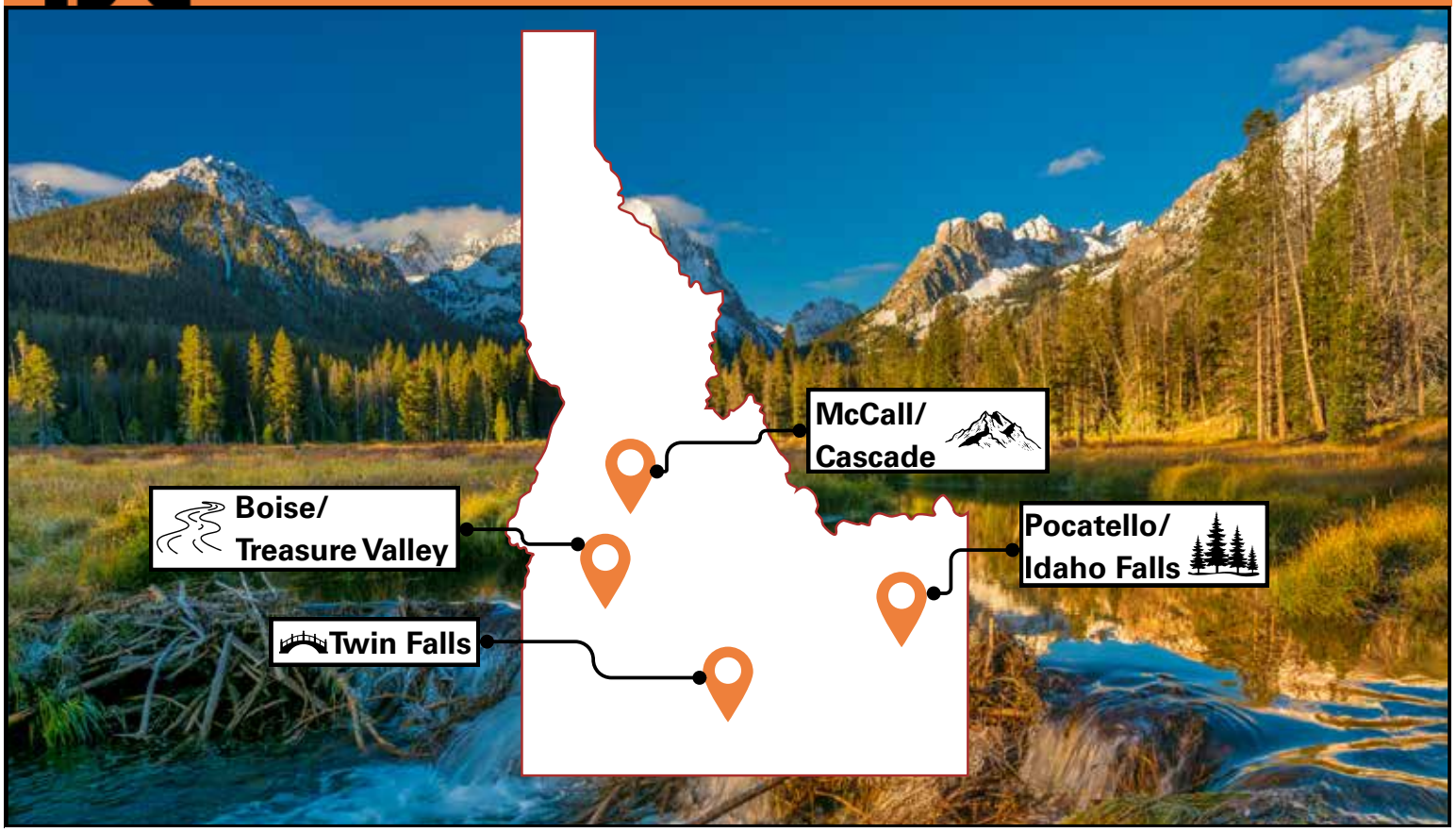
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Idaho AGC Education Foundation Awards 2026 Scholarships

Recognizing the 2026-2027 scholarship recipients

IDAHO AGC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Idaho AGC Education Foundation is proud to recognize the 2026–2027 scholarship recipients, an outstanding group of students preparing for careers in construction, engineering, and architecture. This year's recipients bring a wide range of academic achievements, hands-on industry experience, leadership, and a shared commitment to strengthening the future of the construction industry.

Boise State University Construction Management students Ethan Alldredge, Addy Eaglestone, Kaysic Lundquist, April Marshall, Aaron Standerwick, and Claire Warren are each gaining valuable experience in areas ranging from concrete and heavy civil construction to project management, estimating, safety, and electrical construction. Many are also active in student organizations and industry competitions, developing the leadership and technical skills that will prepare them for future roles as project managers, superintendents, estimators, and construction company leaders. Aaron Standerwick was selected as the recipient of the CLC Scholarship.

Savannah Huber, a Construction Management student at Brigham Young University–Idaho, has combined strong academics with construction trades experience, industry involvement, and community leadership. Idaho State University civil engineering student Luke Mathison, recipient of the McAlvain Memorial Scholarship, is building his knowledge of infrastructure construction through both engineering coursework and hands-on experience with HK Contractors.

The foundation is also supporting the next generation of design professionals. Amiah Berg, a Master of Architecture student at the University of Idaho's Boise campus, is combining architectural education with framing and professional design experience as she works toward becoming a licensed architect. University of Idaho architecture students Roxete Loera and Kesaia Williams are also developing their knowledge of design, materials, construction methods, and field practices while preparing for careers that connect architecture with the construction industry.

Together, these scholarship recipients represent the talent, dedication, and leadership that will help shape Idaho's built environment for years to come. The Idaho AGC Education Foundation is pleased to support their education and professional development as they continue preparing to become the next generation of construction and design industry leaders.

2026–2027 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Ethan Alldredge



Ethan Alldredge is a Construction Management student at Boise State University with an expected graduation date of spring 2027. He has nearly three years of hands-on experience with BriCon, a public works general contractor, where he has worked in concrete construction, site preparation, excavation, grading, and other field operations, while also taking on responsibilities as a crew lead. Alldredge is actively involved in Boise State's construction programs, serving as vice president of operations for the Construction Management Association and secretary of the ACI Student Chapter. He has also competed on Boise State's concrete team at the ASC Regions 6 and 7 competition, earning second place in 2025 and first place in 2026. Alldredge plans to build his career in concrete operations with the long-term goal of becoming a superintendent and leading teams that deliver lasting projects for their communities.

Addy Eaglestone



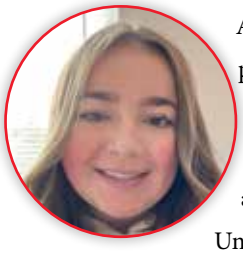
Addy Eaglestone is a Construction Management student at Boise State University with an expected graduation date of May 2027. He began his construction career as a laborer with Cornice Construction in his hometown of Scappoose, Oregon, and has worked his way into a project engineer role while gaining experience in both field and office operations. Eaglestone is also active in Boise State's AGC Student Chapter, where he serves as vice president of operations and previously managed the chapter's shed build for the 2025 Idaho AGC Gala. In addition, he has served as a teaching assistant for the Construction Materials and Methods Lab and participated in the ASC Reno Student Competition. After graduation, Eaglestone plans to continue his career with Cornice Construction, with goals of advancing into superintendent and project management roles, and eventually taking on company ownership.

Kaysic Lundquist



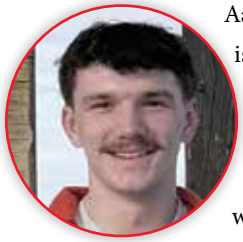
Kaysic Lundquist is a Construction Management student transferring to Boise State University after completing his associate degree at Spokane Falls Community College. With hands-on experience in residential remodeling, framing, plumbing, electrical work, landscaping, and construction safety, Lundquist has developed a strong foundation in both the practical and leadership sides of the industry. He has balanced work and academics while maintaining a strong GPA and has demonstrated leadership through athletics, including serving as a wrestling team captain and earning multiple wrestling and pole vault honors. Lundquist's long-term goal is to become a construction manager and eventually own his own construction company, where he hopes to combine technical expertise, problem-solving, and leadership to build a successful career in the industry.

April Marshall



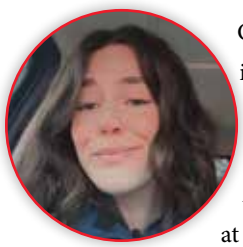
April Marshall is pursuing a B.S. in Construction Management at Boise State University, where she has earned a 3.6 GPA and expects to graduate in May 2028. Inspired by her father and stepfather's careers in heavy civil construction, Marshall has developed a strong interest in building roads, bridges, utilities, and other infrastructure that serves communities. She has gained hands-on industry experience working for Folchi Construction and is actively involved in the Construction Management Association, the National Association of Women in Construction, and Women in Construction, Engineering, and Design. She also served as an alternate on the project management team for the ASC Region 6/7 Reno Competition. Known for her initiative and engagement, Marshall has been recognized with Boise State's Brick Award for outstanding performance in her construction coursework. Her goal is to begin her career as a field or project engineer and eventually advance into a superintendent or project manager role in heavy civil construction.

Aaron Standerwick: CLC Scholarship



Aaron Standerwick is a Construction Management student at Boise State University who brings strong academic achievement, leadership, and hands-on industry experience to his studies. Originally from Juneau, Alaska, Standerwick has gained practical construction experience through his work with Dawson Construction, where he has supported project management activities, estimating, safety inspections, procurement, and field work. He is also actively involved in Boise State's Construction Management Association and was elected to serve as president for the 2026–27 school year. Standerwick was a member of Boise State's Heavy Civil team that earned first place at the ASC Region 6 competition in Reno, and he has consistently earned Dean's List honors while maintaining a GPA of approximately 3.9. After graduation, Standerwick hopes to pursue a career in heavy civil construction or commercial estimating, with the long-term goal of owning a construction company and giving back to the communities that have supported him.

Claire Warren



Claire Warren is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Construction Management at Boise State

University, where she transitioned from Civil Engineering after discovering a strong interest in the hands-on execution and management of construction projects. She has gained valuable industry experience through an engineering internship with Crestline Engineers, performing construction and stormwater inspections, reviewing plans, and assisting with field documentation, and she has also expanded her experience into electrical construction through an internship with Rosendin Electric. Warren has further developed her teamwork and problem-solving skills as a member of Boise State's Construction Management Reno competition team and holds OSHA 10-hour and SWPPP certifications. After graduation, she plans to begin her career as an assistant project manager, combining field experience with project coordination, scheduling, budgeting, safety, and client relations while contributing to Idaho's construction industry.

Savannah Huber



Savannah Huber is pursuing a degree in Construction Management at Brigham Young University–Idaho, building on a strong foundation of hands-on construction experience, academic achievement, and leadership. Her interest in the industry began through high school construction trades courses, where she worked on projects including sheds, press boxes, and a permanent storage facility while gaining experience with multiple construction disciplines. She also participated in SkillsUSA, the ACE Mentor Program, and an internship with ESI, where she gained exposure to active job sites and quality control. Huber initially studied civil engineering before choosing construction management because of her desire for a more hands-on career, and she plans to pursue opportunities in land surveying or field engineering and work toward professional licensure. In addition to her technical interests, Huber has demonstrated a strong commitment to service and leadership through the Star Mayor's Youth Council, National Honor Society, tutoring, and an 18-month mission in California. Her instructors describe her as motivated, dependable, curious, and committed to continuous learning, qualities that will serve her well as she continues her education and prepares for a career in the construction industry.

Luke Mathison: McAlvain Memorial Scholarship



Luke Mathison is a civil engineering student at Idaho State University who plans to graduate in 2028. He has gained hands-on construction experience with HK Contractors, working on a chip seal crew as an equipment operator and completing a quality control internship where he assisted with compaction testing, asphalt mixture analysis, and concrete failure observations. Mathison's coursework in areas such as engineering statics, geotechnics, mechanics of materials, and engineering dynamics has strengthened his interest in applying classroom concepts to real-world construction challenges. He is especially interested in infrastructure projects such as bridges and dams, and hopes future internships will help him determine where he can make the greatest contribution within the civil engineering field. Mathison values teamwork, safety, responsibility, and continued learning, and he looks forward to building a career that contributes to a strong and safe construction industry.

Amiah Berg



Amiah Berg is pursuing a Master of Architecture at the University of Idaho's Boise campus after earning her Bachelor of Environmental Design from Montana State University in 2025. Her interest in the built environment is supported by both design education and hands-on construction experience, including a summer working as a framer for Pinetop Custom Homes, where she gained practical experience with construction trades. Since 2024, Berg has also worked as an intern with Lombard Conrad Architects in Boise, contributing to architectural projects while developing her technical, communication, and project coordination skills. She hopes to become a licensed architect and take on increasing project management and leadership responsibilities, with a focus on connecting thoughtful design with practical construction knowledge.

Roxete Loera



Roxete Loera is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Architecture at the University of Idaho, where she maintains a 4.0 GPA and is also studying Interior

Architecture & Design and Landscape Architecture. Her coursework has given her experience with architectural graphics, construction methods, materials, site analysis, and hands-on design projects, building on earlier experience with AutoCAD and graphic design. Loera is especially interested in commercial architecture and hopes to gain practical construction experience through internships and the University of Idaho's Design Build Studio, with the long-term goal of working with a general contractor. Beyond academics, she has demonstrated creativity and leadership through her work as an art teacher's assistant and as president of her high school art club, yearbook editor-in-chief, National Honor Society historian, and a member of Future Hispanic Leaders of America.

Kesaia Williams



Kesaia Williams is a third-year architecture student at the University of Idaho, where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Architecture after earning an Associate of Arts degree from North Idaho College. Her interest in the construction industry began with a high school job-shadowing experience at Architect's West and has grown through her architecture studies, involvement with the American Institute of Architecture Students, construction site visits, and an internship with Liberty Geotechnical Engineering. During that internship, Williams gained hands-on exposure to density testing, laboratory work, and pile driving projects, and earned WAQTC certification in embankment and base in-place density testing. She hopes to deepen her understanding of structural systems and materials, with a particular interest in designing weather-tolerant roofs for hurricane-prone areas. Known for her initiative, dependability, and calm approach under pressure, Williams has demonstrated a strong work ethic and a willingness to step up when needed, qualities that will serve her well as she continues toward a career in architecture and construction.

The Idaho AGC Education Foundation is proud to recognize the 2026–2027 scholarship recipients, an outstanding group of students preparing for careers in construction, engineering, and architecture.



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Welcome, New Members

Please join us in welcoming these new members, who have joined the Idaho AGC since the last issue of *buildingIdaho.*

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Idaho AGC Members Receive National AGC Safety Awards in Recognition of 2025 Safety Performance

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"A year without incidents is not luck – it is the result of safety woven into every level of a company."

Since 1991, the National AGC Safety Awards (NASA) program has provided AGC members with a way to measure and celebrate their safety achievements. By comparing safety records among members nationwide – based on company size and type of construction work – the program highlights those who have made safety a true priority. It also gives members the chance to earn recognition at the national level for outstanding safety performance.

To participate, a company must be an AGC member and submit summary data from its OSHA Form 300A for the prior year. There is no fee to take part, and once the information is provided, the chapter forwards the entries to the AGC NASA program.

Two types of commendations are presented each year:

- Zero-Incidence Rate Certificate of Commendation, which is awarded to companies that recorded no incidents for the year.
- Incidence Rate Below 25% of Division Rate Certificate of Commendation, which is awarded to companies with an incident rate at least 25 percent lower than the average for their occupational division.

Divisions include Building, Highway, Federal & Heavy, Utility Infrastructure, and Associate/Specialty.

This year, Idaho AGC members recognized through NASA represented more than 4.3 million hours worked. Of the companies recognized, 13 earned the Zero-Incidence Rate Certificate of Commendation for recording no incidents during 2025.

Achieving a year without incidents requires more than luck; it reflects a company-wide commitment to safety, embraced at every level of the organization, from leadership to field crews. The Idaho AGC is proud to recognize the following member companies who earned the Zero-Incidence Rate Certificate of Commendation in 2025:

- American Pump & Drilling
- Andersen Construction of Idaho
- Barin Group, LLC
- Bateman-Hall, Inc.
- Bighorn Traffic Services
- CM Company, Inc.
- GSE Construction Company Inc.
- Guho Corp.
- Hansen-Rice, Inc.
- JC Constructors, Inc.
- Rivers West Construction, Inc.
- Wright Brothers, The Building Company, Eagle LLC
- YMC Inc.

Congratulations to all Idaho AGC members recognized through NASA this year. Your commitment to sending every worker home safe sets the standard for our industry.

Have questions or want to see your company recognized next year? Contact Molly Johnson at mjohnson@idahoagc.org. ●

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Introducing Idaho's Next Generation to Construction





Above left: Working alongside construction professionals, students built 13 sheds for local veterans. Right: The inaugural Let's Build Idaho Summer Construction Camp welcomed 24 female campers between the ages of eight to 15 in June.

Idaho's construction industry depends on people who can turn plans into places where communities live, work, and grow. Attracting those future employees begins well before their first job application. The work begins with giving young people opportunities to explore the trades, discover their abilities, and meet professionals who can help them see a future in construction.

That is the mission driving the Idaho AGC Education Foundation's workforce development efforts. In 2026, the Meridian Construction Combine, Big Dig: Construction vs. Childhood Cancer, and Let's Build Idaho offered distinct ways to connect with young people and families in our community. Together, they demonstrated how member involvement can support the industry's long-term growth and stability while making a meaningful contribution to Idaho communities.



More than 250 high school students from 10 Treasure Valley schools participated in the 2026 Construction Combine.

CONSTRUCTION COMBINE TURNS EXPLORATION INTO EXPERIENCE

More than 250 high school students from 10 Treasure Valley schools participated in the 2026 Construction Combine. Held over two days at the Home Depot in Meridian, the event brought students and educators together with construction professionals for a practical introduction to the industry's career opportunities.

Students rotated through interactive trade stations supported by more than 30 contractors and sponsors. These experiences gave them a chance to try unfamiliar skills, ask questions, and learn directly from people who work in the trades.

On the second day, that exploration became a shared accomplishment. Working alongside construction professionals, students built 13 sheds for local veterans. The project connected new skills with a tangible purpose, showing students both what they could create and how their work could serve others.

For participating members, the Combine offered an opportunity to make construction careers personal and approachable. A conversation at a trade station or encouragement during a build can help a student begin to picture where they might belong in the industry.

LET'S BUILD IDAHO DEVELOPS SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

The inaugural Let's Build Idaho Summer Construction Camp welcomed 24 female campers between the ages of eight to 15 in June for a week of learning through construction projects and creative activities.

Campers practiced using tools safely, worked with varied materials, and experienced the satisfaction of completing something with their own hands.

Projects ranged from contractor clipboards and water bottle holders to wagons and wooden magnet boards. Each provided a chance to develop practical skills and leave camp with something participants could proudly share at home.

Community support helped make that experience accessible. Thirteen scholarships supported camper participation, while 18 sponsors contributed funding, materials, tools, and encouragement.

The camp's value extends beyond the finished projects. Introducing youth to the skilled trades gives them room to discover interests and abilities they may not encounter elsewhere. Building confidence today can open the door to further learning and career exploration in the years ahead.

BIG DIG CONNECTS CONSTRUCTION WITH THE COMMUNITY

The third annual Big Dig: Construction vs. Childhood Cancer, held August 29, welcomed hundreds of families for a close-up look at heavy equipment and the excitement of construction.

With 686 tickets sold, the event raised more than $20,000 for the American Cancer Society's work supporting childhood cancer research, education, advocacy, and services. Contractors, equipment providers, sponsors, and



Big Dig-Ball Drop raffle winner.

volunteers made the day possible through contributions of equipment, time, resources, and financial support.

Alongside its charitable purpose, Big Dig gave children and families a welcoming introduction to the construction community. Climbing aboard equipment creates excitement; meeting the people behind it helps families see an industry invested in the communities it serves.

HELP SHAPE WHAT COMES NEXT

These experiences depend on members willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm. Their participation helps the Education Foundation introduce future employees to construction and strengthen the connections that support a lasting workforce in Idaho.

Members can become workforce ambassadors, help staff workforce efforts throughout the state, sponsor events, or provide volunteers. With planning underway for the 2027 Construction Combine (mark your calendars for April 27-28), now is an excellent time to get involved.

Contact Molly Johnson, senior director of workforce development, at mjohnson@idahoagc.org or (208) 472-0466 to learn how your company can help young people discover their future in construction. ●

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ESCAPE THE JOBSITE



Last truck out! The equipment-yard gate is locked, and the code is missing. Solve the three clues in order to open the lock before the fall rain arrives.

1 FOREMAN'S NOTE

Move each letter back one place in the alphabet. The decoded word is your first digit.

T J Y

Example: D becomes C.

FIRST DIGIT ☐

2 SITE PLAN

Start on your first digit below. Move one square per step:

N, N, E, E, S, W

2	7	1
9	4	8
6	3	5

N = up
E = right
S = down
W = left

FINISH = DIGIT 2 ☐

3 DELIVERY TICKET

Your second digit tells you how many crates arrived. Together they hold 20 padlocks.

3	5
4	?

Missing quantity = third digit.

OPEN THE GATE

Write your digits in clue order.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐

PENCIL + A LITTLE LOGIC
Can you beat the rain?



Milwaukee Member of the Month: May to September 2026



Cody Lewis


Josh Wheeler

Join us in congratulating our recent Milwaukee Member of the Month honorees. These individuals bring dedication, leadership, and a generous spirit to the Idaho AGC and the construction community. From growing the Idaho AGC Health Plan and representing contractors at the Statehouse to developing future leaders, supporting member events, and lending a helping hand, their contributions reflect the many ways our members make a difference.

May: Cody Lewis, Packard Wheeler Succession

Cody Lewis has brought persistence and a can-do attitude to his work as a Preferred Broker for the Idaho AGC Health Plan. Since his appointment in December 2025, Lewis has put his understanding of association health plans to work, quoting potential groups and continuing to pursue the right fit for employers.

After submitting nearly 20 groups, Lewis successfully enrolled two groups for May 2026. Both were new Idaho AGC members, helping grow the Health Plan and our association together. His dedication and follow-through have made him a valued partner in strengthening the organization and supporting Idaho's construction industry.

June: Josh Wheeler, Wheeler Electric

Representative Josh Wheeler, a third-generation Idaho contractor with Wheeler Electric in Idaho Falls, brings firsthand industry experience to his service in the Idaho Legislature. His continued work representing Idaho's construction industry within government reflects a commitment to contractors across the state.

Wheeler's dedication during the legislative session remains deeply appreciated by the Idaho AGC. Alongside his public service, Wheeler Electric continues its work throughout Eastern Idaho. We are grateful for his steady support and for the contributions he and Wheeler Electric make to our association and the industry.

July: Daniel Kircher, Specialty Construction Supply

As chairman of the Idaho AGC Construction Leadership Council (CLC), Daniel Kircher has played an instrumental role in the CLC's successful relaunch. His leadership and industry knowledge support the council's work to develop the next generation of construction



Daniel Kircher



Mark Rush

professionals. Through his role as CLC chair, Kircher also serves on the Idaho AGC Board of Directors, helping guide the association's future.

Kircher's commitment to the industry is matched by his kindness and the care he shows for the people in it. He brings an approachable presence to his leadership roles and is held in high regard by those who know him. His investment in emerging leaders continues to strengthen the Idaho AGC community.

August: Mark Rush, ELRUS Aggregate Systems

ELRUS Aggregate Systems joined the Idaho AGC earlier this year and Mark Rush wasted no time getting involved. An Eastern Idaho member, Rush hosted sponsor holes at both the Eastern Idaho Golf Tournament in Pocatello and the Summer Outing Golf Tournament at Tamarack, bringing a keg for golfers to enjoy along the way.

Rush's upbeat attitude and welcoming presence helped make both events memorable. His enthusiasm is a wonderful example of the connections members can build by jumping in and participating. In a short time, Rush has made a lasting impression on staff and fellow members, and we look forward to seeing him and the ELRUS team at many more events.

September: Cody Carter, Specialty Construction Supply

Cody Carter's recognition began with a simple act of kindness. While Idaho AGC's Sue Fudge was out on a morning walk, she spotted a neighbor's dog loose in the street and needed help getting it to safety. Carter was working nearby on the Ustick Road project between Linder and Ten Mile when he saw Fudge needed a hand. He stopped, helped wrangle the dog, and stayed until they could contact the owner and get the pup safely home.

A hardworking field superintendent with Specialty Construction Supply, Carter represents the people in the field whose character makes our industry stronger every day. His willingness to stop and help reflects the care he brings to his community, and we are proud to recognize him.

We are grateful to each of these honorees for the time, energy, and care they bring to the Idaho AGC. Their contributions strengthen our association and the communities where we live and work. Congratulations and thank you for all you do! ●



Cody Carter.

A Familiar Face Return to Steer Idaho's Roads

Alberto Gonzalez returns to lead ITD through new funding changes



By Shayna Wiwierski

Eight weeks into his tenure as director of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), Alberto Gonzalez still describes himself as new, but he is hardly a stranger to the department.

Gonzalez, who grew up in South Lake Tahoe and later in California's Eldorado and Placer counties before attending the University of San Francisco, has spent nearly two decades moving through Idaho state government, first at the Department of Health and Welfare, where he ran 211 navigation services and helped Governor Butch Otter stand up the state's health insurance exchange, and later as the state's chief information officer (CIO), where he oversaw the consolidation of information technology across 53 executive branch agencies. Before that, he spent seven years at ITD itself, leading a modernization of the Division of Motor Vehicles that replaced processes and systems that, in his words, were "about 40 years old," and not by exaggeration.

That history, he says, gives him a comfort level with ITD that a true outsider would lack. But it has also sharpened his sense of what has changed – and

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what hasn't – since he was last inside the department.

"I think to me, the districts are like the life and blood of ITD," Gonzalez says, referring to the agency's six regional districts, which employ roughly 1,100 of ITD's 1,600 workers, compared with about 500 at headquarters in Boise. "All of them know who the district engineer is. All of them know who to call at the local level."

That appreciation, he says, is different this time around. As CIO, he tried to replicate that kind of local presence for IT services in communities like Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, Idaho Falls, and Pocatello. Returning to ITD convinced him no agency does it as effectively as the districts do.

But Gonzalez also sees an organization in need of consistency. Contractors and consultants who work across district lines, he says, often encounter different forms and different processes depending on where the job is.

"If they do work in Coeur d'Alene, they have to fill out certain forms or follow a certain process. If they do work in Idaho Falls, it's a different way," he says, adding that standardizing those processes is "a really important high priority for me," not because the districts are doing anything wrong, but because a single, consistent approach could uncover efficiencies and make it easier for contractors to do business with the state.

That relationship with the construction industry sits near the center of how Gonzalez frames his own role. With Idaho's increased investment levels in transportation over the last few years, the state, he says bluntly, "does not have the capacity to perform a lot of the duties that we're asked to do" without its contractors, engineering firms, and other partners.

"We value and rely on our contractor community," he says, adding that he intends to increase engagement with that community – including recent conversations with Idaho AGC's CEO Wayne Hammon – rather than change how heavily the department relies on it.

Gonzalez has also rebuilt ITD's executive team, pairing veteran ITD engineers Todd Hubbard and Dave Kuisti with Laila Kral, former administrator of the Local Highway Technical Advisory Council, and longtime finance and DMV leader Lisa McClellan. He describes the group as "change agents" who are "not afraid of change, but they do it in a way that's respectful to the workforce."

He is candid, too, about what looms largest: money. After what he called a run of prosperous years for infrastructure investment, driven by state budget surpluses and expanded federal programs, Idaho is entering a tighter budget cycle even as needs mount, including aging bridges and rural roads. Gonzalez says the coming legislative session will reveal the pace and level of reinvestment in infrastructure that supports "safety, mobility, and economic opportunity."

Asked what would make his first year a success, Gonzalez did not hesitate: a new, sustainable revenue package; better employee pay; and an accelerated timeline for the return of ITD headquarters to the State Street Campus.

Gonzalez succeeds Scott Stokes, who retired earlier this year and whom he calls "my favorite boss." He credits him with an employee-centric, Idaho-centered leadership style that he intends to build on rather than replace. Where he sees room for a different approach is in advocacy, including working with lawmakers, the governor's office, and the public more directly on the state's infrastructure needs.

"We have a responsibility to really educate lawmakers, the public, and the governor's office on the absolute critical needs that the state has," he says. "We have to tell the story, and once we tell the story, leave it up to them to decide."

For now, Gonzalez says, that story begins with what he has found on returning to an agency he already knew well.

"I really do think we have one of the best transportation departments in the country," he says. "So, for me, I'm hoping that the contractor and consultant community helps us tell the story and helps us work on that revenue package. We're looking forward to continuing our relationship with them." ●



Design Assist vs. Delegated Design: Know Your Responsibility and Manage Liability



By Joe Meuleman, Meuleman Law Group, PLLC

Project owners have increasingly found that involving contractors with the design process can provide many benefits. Design assist and delegated design are two methods to provide contractor design input. But the lack of uniform industry or legal definitions for these roles can lead to confusion and unexpected liability. It is important to clarify these roles and address the risks associated with each before moving forward with a project.

For the purpose of this article, design assist means that the prime contractor and its subcontractors or vendors provide design input, but the project owner's design professional retains all design responsibility. Design assist risks include the following:

Unexpected design liability. The use of generic terms such as "design" or "design assist" in a construction contract may invite regulatory and personal liability. Most states have statutes governing professional design services and licensing requirements that can impose penalties. It is therefore important to negotiate contract language detailing the services to be provided and ensure that they are not considered professional services under state statutes. Detailed examples of these services can be found in the ConsensusDocs® industry standard design-assist addendum (CD541). Additionally, contracts with design-assist services should include language providing that the contractor's obligations are done, exclusively, in its capacity as a contractor and not as a design professional.

Erosion of Spearin protection. Under the Spearin doctrine, an owner that provides plans and specifications impliedly warrants they are adequate and the contractor may rely upon them in constructing the project. The doctrine entitles contractors to recover additional compensation or time resulting from design defects and absolves contractor from liability if the project is completed in accordance with the plans and specifications. Some courts have found, however, that the doctrine may not be available where contractors are involved with the design process. Contractors should determine if the state in which the project is located has case law addressing this risk.

Insurance. As detailed above, contractors performing design assist services should take steps to disclaim their provision of professional services in the contract documents. Contractors should nevertheless review the design assist services contracted for with their insurance provider to determine whether professional liability coverage is warranted.

Delegated design, by contrast, means that the prime contractor and its subcontractors or vendors take responsibility for a discrete portion of the project design to meet specified performance criteria. Delegated design risks include the following:

Warranty obligations. Including delegated design services in the contractually defined terms "Work" or "Defective Work" may result in contract liability that exceeds the professional standard of care applicable to design professionals and covered by professional liability insurance. This liability gap can be problematic, particularly when the licensed design professional limits liability for services provided. Contractors performing delegated design should seek to exclude design services from the scope of warranty obligations or ensure proper risk transfer and coverage downstream to the design professional.

Licensing. States differ on how design professionals are regulated and penalties for violating licensing statutes. For example, Idaho licensing statutes prohibit unlicensed persons from holding themselves out as design professionals. A contractor performing delegated design services in Idaho should therefore include language in the contract expressly providing that the design services will be performed by a licensed design professional. Contractors should evaluate the laws in the state in which the project is located to avoid statutory violations.

Insurance and flow-down gaps. Delegated design obligations

are generally passed down to a subcontractor and from a subcontractor to a licensed design consultant. Under either scenario, the party subcontracting the design services remain responsible. Care should be taken to properly flow down insurance and indemnity obligations and address any limitations or design liability. Contractors should also obtain professional liability insurance with appropriate limits.

Design assist and delegated design provide opportunity for contractors to add value. But contractors should carefully evaluate the services provided and whether they may result in unintended consequences. Know which role you're in before you sign.

Joe Meuleman is a member of the Meuleman Law Group where he primarily practices in the areas of construction law, government contracts, and litigation. He regularly works with clients to avoid costly disputes by assisting with contract and claim negotiations, advising on industry best practices and changes in the law, and providing general counsel on business decisions. ●

A More Human Future for Employee Benefits

Adapted from Alliant Employee Benefits' AI for HR: What the Next Era of Employee Benefits Demands

Employee benefits shape some of the most personal decisions people make at work, from managing health to supporting a family. Artificial intelligence can improve that experience, but its value should be measured by more than speed. The stronger opportunity is to help employers and advisors see needs sooner, make better decisions, and connect employees with the right support.

AI can bring information together, identify emerging patterns, and help surface cost drivers before they become larger problems. It can also handle routine requests, such as finding plan details or explaining a deductible, giving employees quicker answers, and reducing administrative work for HR teams. That capacity gives benefits professionals and advisors more time to interpret tradeoffs, solve complex issues, and advocate for people.

The right balance depends on the moment. Someone looking up a care option may be well served by a fast, digital response. Someone facing a serious diagnosis, a denied claim or an unexpected medical bill may need context, judgment, and empathy. A strong benefits experience recognizes the difference and makes it easy to reach a knowledgeable person when the situation calls for one.

That experience also depends on trust. Benefits systems can involve sensitive claims, pharmacy, eligibility, and employee-provided information. Before using AI, organizations need to understand what data a tool can access, how it is stored and used, who can see it, and when human review is required. HR, benefits, cybersecurity, privacy, and legal teams all have a role in setting those expectations.

Adding AI to disconnected platforms may make existing processes faster without making them easier to navigate. A more connected approach brings technology, useful intelligence, and benefits expertise together. Nava Benefits, now an Alliant company, and HQ are part of Alliant's effort to shape that model.

AI is already entering benefits through vendors, platforms, and employees' daily habits. The organizations that use it well will look beyond how much work it automates. They will ask whether it helps them act earlier, offer more responsive support, and connect people to human expertise at the right time. Used thoughtfully, AI can make room for the judgment, advocacy, and care that benefits have always depended on. ●

Right People, Right Seats Start at the Top



By Brent Oetken, Certified EOS Implementer

This summer I spoke with many leaders at the AGC Leadership Summit in McCall. One word kept coming up in those conversations: accountability. How do I get my people to truly own their work? Why do I keep having the same conversations? Why does everything still land on my desk?

It's easy to point at the forces outside our walls. The labor market is tight. Good applicants are hard to find. Costs keep climbing. Those things are real and every contractor in Idaho feels them. But here's what I find fascinating: in the same market, with the same labor pool, some companies thrive while others struggle. The difference usually isn't luck. It's what's happening inside the building.

That's good news, because what happens inside the building is something you can change.

Your accountability problem may be a clarity problem

Here's a shift I'd invite you to consider. When accountability breaks down, most of us assume we have a people problem. Sometimes we do. More often, we have a clarity problem.

Picture a seat on your leadership team that frustrates you. Can you write down, in five lines, exactly what that seat owns? Would the person sitting in it write the same five lines? If those lists don't match, holding anyone accountable becomes nearly impossible. They may be working hard on the wrong things or quietly guessing at what winning looks like.

Most of us came up through the field. We got promoted because we were great estimators, superintendents, or builders. Nobody handed us a playbook for building a leadership team, so we did what made sense at the time. We filled seats with people we trusted, with family or with the candidate who had the impressive resume. Sometimes that works. When it doesn't, it's rarely because anyone is a bad person. It's because the seat was never clear or the fit was never checked.

And here's the hopeful part: some of the people you're frustrated with today may be the right people sitting in unclear seats. Get clear and you may be surprised how much changes.

It starts at the top

Right people, right seats begins with the owner and the leadership team, not with the next hire in the field. Your people watch what happens at the top. When the leadership team is clear, aligned, and holding each other accountable, that clarity rolls downhill. Foremen and PMs start operating the same way because they see it modeled every day.

That puts the most powerful lever right in your hands. You don't have to fix the labor market. You get to start with your own team, and with your own seat.

Define the seat before you fill it

A seat described as "handles operations" or "runs the office" isn't really a seat. It's a hope.

In EOS we use the Accountability Chart to bring clarity. For each seat, write down the five or so major roles it owns. Not a list of tasks. The roles. For a VP of operations that might be field scheduling, safety, quality, project profitability and leading, managing and holding people accountable (LMA). When the seat is clear, you can evaluate a person against it. When it's fuzzy, you end up judging people by how you feel about them that week.

Start with your own seat. Many owners discover they're sitting in three or four seats at once. Seeing that on paper is often the moment everything starts to make sense.

Make sure they fit the company and the seat

Once the seat is clear, look at fit. It has two parts.

The right person shares your core values. Not the words on the break room wall, but the handful of traits that describe the people you love working with. When someone shares your values, you can trust them with the hard calls.

In EOS we use a simple one-page tool called the People Analyzer. It puts your core values and GWC side by side so you can see whether someone is the right person in the right seat in about 30 seconds, instead of after months of frustration.

The right seat means the person truly GWCs the role:

Get it. They understand the seat, the business, and how the pieces connect.

Want it. They genuinely want the job, not just the title or the pay.

Capacity to do it. They have the time, skill, emotional capacity, and bandwidth to deliver.

When all three are a yes, something shifts. You stop managing that person and start leading alongside them. When one is a no, the kindest thing you can do is be honest about it. Often that person is a great fit for a different seat, and everyone wins when they find it.

See it in 30 seconds

In EOS we use a simple one-page tool called the People Analyzer. It puts your core values and GWC side by side so you can see whether someone is the right person in the right seat in about 30 seconds, instead of after months of frustration.

Here's my invitation. Start at the top. Run the People Analyzer on yourself first. Then run it on each member of your leadership team. Once the leadership team is solid, roll it through the rest of the organization.

I've watched many leadership teams do this for the first time. There's usually a moment when the room gets quiet and then someone says, "So that's why this keeps happening." That moment is where lasting change begins. Problems that felt like permanent parts of the business suddenly look solvable, because now you can see them clearly.

Get the tool

If you don't have a copy of the People Analyzer or aren't sure how to use it, reach out. I'm happy to send one along with a short guide for running it with your team. Email me at brent.oetken@eosworldwide.com.

The right people are often closer than you think. Sometimes they're already on your team, waiting for a clear seat and a leader willing to go first.

Brent Oetken is a certified EOS implementer based in Caldwell. For nine years he has helped Idaho leadership teams get aligned, face truth, and gain traction that sticks. He believes that strengthening Idaho businesses strengthens our communities and families too. ●

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Your Labor Shortage Starts After You Hire Them

By Consilio Consultants



If you hire 10 people and lose four before they learn where anything is, you don't have a recruiting problem. You have an operating problem.

Construction's workforce shortage is real. Qualified people are difficult to find, wages continue to climb, and entire sectors compete for the same limited pool. But "labor shortage" has also become a convenient explanation for people companies successfully recruit—and then unnecessarily lose.

According to the 2026 AGC–NCCER Workforce Survey, 83 percent of contractors report turnover among new field employees in the first 90 days. 42 percent say new hires fail to show or quit shortly after starting.

Companies are spending more on recruiting, compensation, training, school partnerships, and advertising. Then the person they worked so hard to find arrives Monday morning, and walks into an experience no one actually owns.

We are pouring more people into the top of the funnel while ignoring the hole in the bottom.

THE ACTUAL FAILURE

Most construction companies have an onboarding process. Paperwork gets completed. Safety videos get watched. Policies get signed. Someone points toward the jobsite. Administratively, the person has been onboarded. Operationally, they may have been abandoned.

The foreman didn't know they were coming. The superintendent assumed someone else had explained everything. Nobody clarified what the new employee actually knows, what they still need to learn, or who to ask when they get stuck. They are given 15 minutes of instruction at full speed and then judged for not knowing how things work.

We recruit as if people are scarce and onboard them like they are disposable. That contradiction is costing companies good people.

A new employee doesn't know your history, your acronyms, your personalities, or your unwritten rules. They don't know whether asking a question shows initiative or exposes weakness. But they are paying very close attention. Within the first few days, they are already answering questions you may not realize they are asking:

- Do these people actually want me here?
- Who can I trust?
- What does good work look like on this crew?
- Can I ask a question without getting made to feel stupid?
- Does the person leading me have any interest in helping me succeed?

Your new hire begins forming an opinion of your company within hours. That decision is rarely shaped by the executive who recruited them or the values painted on the office wall. It is shaped by the person they work beside and the person they work for.

THREE THINGS TO CHANGE TOMORROW

1. Tell the truth before day one

Stop selling the job and start previewing it. Explain the schedule, travel, physical demands, pace, and performance standards. Let candidates see the environment and meet the people whenever possible.

A candidate who opts out before being hired is not a failed recruit—they just saved you the cost of replacing them 30 days later. Clarity doesn't scare away the right people. It helps them make an informed commitment.

2. Give one person ownership

One specific person should know the employee is coming, meet them when they arrive, explain how the crew operates, and check that they have what they need. Not someone who hands them a packet—someone who notices

whether they are connecting, learning, and beginning to contribute.

That person doesn't need a new title or a 12-page checklist. They need clear ownership and 10 intentional minutes at the right moments.

If nobody can tell you who owns the employee experience between accepted offer and productive employee, you have found the gap.

3. Ask before the exit interview

Check in at seven, 30, and 60 days. Not with "Everything going okay?"—that earns an automatic "Yep."

Ask instead:

- What has been different from what you expected?
- What is making it harder to do good work here?
- Is there anything happening that is making you question whether you want to stay?

Then listen without defending the company, the crew, or the supervisor.

If the first honest conversation happens after someone resigns, it is not an exit interview. It is an autopsy.

The labor market may be outside your control. The experience people have once they join your company is not.

Before approving another recruiting campaign, ask one harder question: What happens to a good person after we hire them?

If the answer depends entirely on which project, superintendent, or foreman they happen to get, your workforce shortage may not begin in the labor market.

It may begin inside your own company.

You already know how to build things that last. Your people deserve the same standard. Consilio helps construction companies build the leadership and onboarding systems that keep good people. ●

If the first honest conversation happens after someone resigns, it is not an exit interview. It is an autopsy.

The labor market may be outside your control. The experience people have once they join your company is not.



Idaho's Growth Dilemma

Idaho's growth strains housing, infrastructure, and workforce needs

By Shayna Wiwierski



Idaho now has more than two-million residents, and the state has grown by more than 10 percent since 2020. It has added roughly 190,000 people since the last census, and for many Idahoans that number is less a statistic than a daily experience, felt in crowded roads, rising rents, and farmland that has become subdivisions.

Sean Schupack, senior director of government affairs for the Idaho AGC, does not dismiss those frustrations. He calls them "real," and he notes that the people who build Idaho's projects sit in the same traffic, send their children to the same schools, and draw from the same water systems as everyone else. What worries him is where the conversation goes next.

"Wanting well-planned growth is not anti-growth," Schupack says.

The line is crossed, he argues, when the question shifts from how to manage growth responsibly to how to stop the next project. It shows up, he says, in density reductions, added permitting requirements, long approval processes, and opposition to proposals that fit a community's own plans.

Nor does he see the resistance as simply a newcomer's reflex. A Boise State statewide survey, he notes, found that longtime residents were more likely than recent arrivals to say Idaho was growing too fast.

Ken Burgess, a partner in a government affairs firm who lobbies for the Idaho Home Builders Association, offers a different read, though he calls it anecdotal. Burgess, a native Idahoan who says he doesn't love how the state is changing either, observed that the neighbors who show up to planning and zoning hearings to oppose new housing often seem to have lived here fewer than six or seven years.

"Kind of have theirs, so to speak," is how he describes them.

The disagreement over who is doing the objecting may matter less than what the objections produce. Burgess says the pressure is greatest in Canyon County, Caldwell, and Nampa, where development is moving west as Boise and Meridian run short of space. There, he says, worry over the loss of productive agricultural land, including seed-crop acreage, is driving opposition. He adds that several current elected officials in the cities facing the most challenges won their seats on largely anti-growth platforms. Meridian, the state's second-largest city, is the counterexample he offers, a place where elected officials and staff have accepted that growth is here and planned for it.

The cost of the alternative is measured in years. Burgess says the path from a developer beginning work on a piece of land to selling a lot averages five to six years right now, with two or three of those years consumed by entitlement and permitting alone. Developers put tens of millions of dollars into infrastructure like water, sewer, and roads, he says, and may see no return for four or five years.

Those delays travel well beyond the developer. Schupack says contractors make decisions months and sometimes years ahead about hiring, equipment, bonding capacity, and training. When a project is reduced, delayed, or rejected, the uncertainty reaches the general contractor, the excavator, the concrete contractor, the electrician, the plumber, suppliers, and engineers. Idaho has roughly 77,000 construction jobs, he says, so the stakes are considerable.

The examples he cites are specific. In Eagle, the Watermark project from Boise Hunter Homes, on infill land near the Boise River designated for mixed use, was first proposed with 154 attached homes. The developer cut that to 147 after feedback,

the city council asked for a further reduction and continued the matter, and the project eventually advanced with fewer units. Schupack acknowledges legitimate site-specific issues but said a central part of the debate was still whether there were simply too many homes. In another case, a small downtown Eagle proposal in 2025 that paired commercial space with four apartments on a .16-acre lot was denied after disputes over parking, landscaping, and design requirements.

Workforce is the quieter casualty. Schupack says employers are far more willing to take on an apprentice or buy equipment when they can see years of work ahead, and an unpredictable pipeline makes them cautious. There is a housing angle as well.

"If an electrician, carpenter, equipment operator, or young project engineer cannot afford to live near the community where they work, that becomes a workforce problem as much as a housing problem," says Schupack.

How large the housing gap actually is depends on who is counting, and on what is being counted. Jason Lantz, director of marketing and communications for Idaho Housing and Finance Association, says there is no single official shortage number, and that different methods produce different results. Vacation-home ownership in resort communities can skew some counts. By the agency's own comparison of Census permit and household data, Idaho added about 83,000 households and authorized about 95,000 housing units, which he says points to a gap of roughly 12,000 to 20,000. That figure tracks population growth and how many units are needed to keep pace with it. Schupack cites a separate Idaho Housing estimate that measures something different: affordability. By that count, the state is short nearly 25,000 affordable and available homes for renters earning less than half of area median income. The two numbers are not interchangeable, and closing the first gap would not necessarily produce more affordable housing. That distinction matters to the many native Idahoans who have found themselves priced out as the state grows.

Affordability also varies widely across the state. Using a ratio of median home price to median household income, Lantz says Boise stands at 5.4, compared with 4.5 in Salt Lake City and 3.8 in Spokane, while Blaine County reaches 10.2. Idaho, he says, is roughly on par with its Mountain West peers, but the differences between communities are vast. He was careful not to name a policy that would fix it.

'What works in Ketchum or McCall won't necessarily translate to Boise or Canyon County, and no two or three levers will do the job alone," says Lantz, adding that any delays of any kind mean fewer units and, eventually, higher costs for buyers and renters.

Max Pond, government affairs director for Idaho REALTORS®, described a "vocal minority" at city council and county commission meetings, and a "no vacancy" mindset in some places. Local governments, he says, often find it easier to reach for a building moratorium or larger lot sizes than to take a measured approach. He credits Boise with speeding up permitting in recent years but noted that not every jurisdiction has the resources Boise does.

Some of the response has come from the state. Pond says the Legislature passed two pre-emption bills this session: one allowing starter-home subdivisions on smaller lots with smaller setbacks, and another making it easier for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units. A broader effort, House Bill 705, which would have eased multifamily development in commercially zoned areas, did not advance, Schupack says. He describes a larger unresolved debate over how much growth management should stay local and when statewide reform is needed.

The AGC, meanwhile, has focused on making growth function. This year it worked to expand the State Taxation Anticipated Revenue (STAR) infrastructure financing program, raising the maximum project size to $100 million, and to create a 30-day timeline for initial public works plan reviews, along with inspection timelines and third-party options when inspections are delayed. It also helped protect more than $37 million for the Idaho Transportation Department's Strategic Initiatives Fund. The need is large: Schupack says the department identified roughly $1.3 billion in highway projects that could move to an unfunded category in its seven-year planning process.

Burgess points to a contradiction he finds hard to ignore: the same officials pressing builders to bring down the cost of owning a home, he says, are adding fees, impact fees, infrastructure costs, and delays that get passed along in the price.

"They just don't seem to draw that connection," says Burgess, adding that he was also clear that supporting housing production does not mean approving everything proposed.

That is the balance Schupack keeps returning to. Communities should decide what they want to look like, he says, but their plans must allow enough housing and commercial development to meet real demand, provide predictable approvals, and include a realistic way to pay for infrastructure. The risk of neglecting that, he warns, is a cycle in which housing grows more expensive, workers commute farther, traffic worsens, employers struggle to recruit, and residents grow angrier at the growth that caused it all.

"Saying no to a subdivision does not widen the highway that is already congested," says Schupack. ●

Your Jobsite is Locked Up at Night. Is Your Business?



Construction has become one of the most targeted industries for cybercrime.

Five cybersecurity priorities every Idaho contractor should have in place

By Aaron Zimmerman, President & CEO, TotalCare IT

Idaho contractors know how to protect a jobsite. Fencing, cameras, locked conex boxes. Nobody leaves an excavator running with the keys in it overnight. But the same business that guards its equipment carefully often leaves its digital front door wide open.

Construction has become one of the most targeted industries for cybercrime. That isn't because contractors are careless. It's because the business runs on things criminals love: large payments moving between many parties, tight deadlines, crews spread across multiple sites, and constant communication over email and phone. One fraudulent wire transfer can wipe out the margin on a project. A ransomware attack can halt bidding, payroll, and scheduling for days.

The good news is you don't need to become a technology expert to protect your company. You need to get a handful of fundamentals right.

1. Verify every money request by phone

The most expensive attack in construction usually isn't a hack. It's an email, and more often than not, it looks like it came from someone you work with every day.

It might be "the owner," writing from the road: "Closing on a piece of heavy machinery and need a wire out before three. Can't talk, in a meeting." Or a project manager asking the office to update their direct deposit before payday. The criminal has either broken into a real account or set up one that's a letter off, and has often spent weeks reading emails to learn names, projects, and how your team talks. Fake vendor emails are still out there too: "We've changed banks. Please update our payment information."

This is called business email compromise, and it ranks among the costliest crimes reported to the FBI every year. The fix costs nothing. Adopt a written policy that any request to move money, change payment or payroll details, or skip the usual approval

must be confirmed by phone or in person, using a number you already have, never one in the email. That goes double when the request comes from the boss. Make it policy, not a judgment call, so no one feels awkward calling the owner to double-check.

2. Control who can access what

Every login should require multi-factor authentication, starting with email, banking, and accounting. But a strong login only matters if the right level of access sits behind it.

Give people access only to what their job requires. A foreman doesn't need payroll, and an estimator doesn't need to change banking details. Keep administrator rights off everyday accounts, and grant elevated access only for a specific task, then take it back. That way, if an attacker does get into an account, they get far less.

Access should also end when the job does. Construction runs on seasonal hires, subcontractors, and turnover, and old accounts are a favorite way in for cybercriminals and disgruntled former employees alike. On someone's last day, shut off their email, software, shared files, and gate codes, right alongside collecting their keys and equipment.

3. Know every device connected to your business

You can't protect what you don't know you have. That's why the first of the CIS Critical Security Controls, a widely used cybersecurity framework, is keeping an inventory of every device connected to your business. For contractors, that means laptops, tablets, phones, jobsite cameras, hotspots, and even truck telematics. Each one is a way in, especially a jobsite camera still using its factory password or a laptop forgotten in a job trailer.

Keep a current list of every device: who has it, where it is, and whether it's up to date. Review it when people come and go and when projects wrap up. Anything on your network that isn't on the list should be tracked down and managed or removed.

4. Protect the devices in the field

Your office isn't the only place your business lives.

Every company device should have a passcode, automatic screen lock, and encryption turned on. Remote monitoring and management takes care of the rest behind the scenes. It installs security patches and updates, watches each device's health and security, and flags problems so they can be fixed remotely, often before anyone notices, no matter where the device is working.

Then think about how those devices connect. The old model assumed everyone worked inside the office, behind one firewall. Your crews don't. Modern security runs from the cloud instead of a box in the office, so protection follows each person and device wherever they go. Whether a superintendent logs in from a job trailer, a hotel, or a coffee shop's WiFi, the connection is encrypted, checked, and filtered before it reaches your email, files, or accounting system.

5. Set ground rules for AI

Your team is probably already using AI. Estimators draft scopes with it, project managers summarize meeting notes, and office staff polish emails. That saves real time, but free AI tools come with a catch: what you type in may be stored and used to train the public model. Paste in a bid, a client contract, or employee records, and that information is out of your hands for good.

Decide which AI tools your company approves, and use business versions that keep your data private. Write a simple policy on what can't be shared, such as pricing, client details, and personal information. And before turning on AI that searches across your company files, review who can access what. AI doesn't break your permissions; it exposes them. A salary spreadsheet sitting in the wrong shared folder becomes something anyone can find with a single question.

The goal isn't to block AI. It's to put the right guardrails around it.

TWO MORE WORTH A LOOK

- Backups: Make sure your data is backed up at least once a day, and that those backups are tested regularly (we recommend monthly). A backup you've never tested is only a hope.
- Cyber insurance: Ask your agent whether your policy covers money lost when someone on your team is tricked into sending a wire. It's often excluded or capped.

START WITH ONE STEP THIS MONTH

You don't have to fix everything at once. Pick one item from this list and put it in place this month. The payment verification policy is a strong first move, because it costs nothing and closes one of the most expensive gaps. Then work down the list.

Cybersecurity isn't about fear. It's about the same thing you already do on every jobsite: protecting what you've built. The contractors who stay ahead of these threats aren't the ones with the biggest budgets. They're the ones who treat security as part of how they run the business.

ABOUT TOTALCARE IT

TotalCare IT is a managed IT and cybersecurity provider serving businesses across Idaho, with offices in Boise and Idaho Falls. We help operationally critical businesses, including contractors and construction firms, keep their technology secure, reliable, and productive so owners can focus on the work. Our purpose is simple: we protect what you've built. To talk with our team about your company's IT and cybersecurity, schedule a discovery call at totalcareit.net/discoverycall or call 208-881-9713. ●



From Recycling Center to Refuge

How a tiny Idaho town built the facility it was told it couldn't afford

An old pole barn, once used as the county recycling center, sitting on a corner lot near the school, was transformed into the New Meadows Child Development Center.

By Shayna Wiwierski



An entryway ceiling of decorative wood slats, originally priced near $20,000, was reimagined by Dalrymple and Hoffman's team as a black suspended grid fitted with translucent-colored plexiglass panels, lit by the building's existing east-facing clerestory windows.

For years, the mothers and fathers of New Meadows began their days the same way: buckling their children into car seats and driving 10 miles north to McCall, the only town in the area with a licensed daycare. They would drop off their kids, double back to New Meadows for a full day of work, then reverse the trip that evening – up the hill and back – before dinner, homework, or bedtime could even begin.

The town's only preschool operated out of a windowless room at the local school. There was no after-school program. There was no place for a child struggling with anxiety or grief to talk to a counsellor. There was, in short, no infrastructure for the youngest residents of a town that could not otherwise survive without them.

Julie Good, the mayor of New Meadows, had been staring at a possible answer for nearly a year before she acted on it: an old pole barn, once used as the county recycling center, sitting on a corner lot near the school.

"I had been looking at it for almost a year, thinking about the possibility of turning it into something for the use of the kids in our community," says Good.

The building belonged to Adams County, and when Good began negotiating to buy it, the county's opening price was far beyond what the city could pay. She countered with an ultimatum of her own – sell it



Hand-blown glass pendant lights, which were donated at a steep discount by a Seattle glassblower and friend of the Dalrymple's, replaced fixtures the budget couldn't otherwise support.



The New Meadows Child Development Center opened in September 2025, one year after groundbreaking, now housing an income-based daycare, a preschool with actual windows, an after-school program and offices for family and youth counseling, all beside a new community skate pavilion.

or move it within 30 days. The county came back with a workable number.

Around the same time, Good learned of a narrow window through the Idaho Workforce Development Council, which for two years had funded child-care projects tied to workforce needs, but only for the renovation of an existing structure, not new construction. The recycling center fit the requirement precisely. What it did not fit was any conventional definition of "renovation-ready." The first architects Good approached toured the open-air, foundation-less barn and told her plainly that it could not be done.

"They did not catch the vision," says Good. "We never received any calls back."

Ian Hoffman, a partner at GHm Architects, did. His firm had employees with strong ties to rural communities and understood exactly what the town was missing. When Hoffman and project manager Allison Muntz walked the site, Good remembers watching them catch fire with ideas in real time. From there, the team submitted a request for qualifications, and Dalrymple Construction Services, a firm that has deep ties to the area, grew up in McCall and now live in New Meadows, won the job.

"We had the same qualifications as the other contractors that were out of Boise," says Joseph Dalrymple, the company's co-owner, "and so they decided to give us the job."

He also gave the city an early warning.

"We told the mayor on day one, you don't have near enough money to do this project," Dalrymple says. "And that became really evident about two months into it."

The city's budget was $1.1 million, built around an initial $600,000 grant. A conventional new-build project of similar scope and square footage would likely have cost more than $3 million. Dalrymple's firm decided early on that would define

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Preschool Classroom



Old Recycle Center



Hallway Lighting

the entire effort: they would build the project essentially at cost, charging only for what they could not absorb, which was a job shack, a superintendent, the irreducible minimum.

"Everything we built there, we didn't make a dime on the project," says Dalrymple.

What the budget could not buy, the region seemed to supply anyway. C&M Lumber combed through invoices monthly to shave costs wherever possible. A spray-foam insulation supplier donated $10,000 worth of material. R&M Steel donated the playground cover. Tates Rents donated $10,000 in initial equipment and deeply discounted equipment throughout the project. Framing crews rotated in as if by design, though none of it was: one company stayed three months past a planned 60-day window; when its crew finally had to leave for another job, a concrete contractor called unprompted with five idle workers; a neighbor who had just wrapped a nearby project walked over and offered his crew for four more months; another contractor who lived across the highway showed up as siding work began, saying he'd been watching the project and wanted in.

"Every time we were looking for some help, they just showed up on the job site," says Dalrymple.

Roughly 40 specialty contractors and suppliers, nearly all local, ultimately touched the project. The finished cost came in around $1.5 million, about half of standard market value, absorbed through donated labor, discounted materials and outright gifts, including one from a Boise woman who saw a news segment on the project and donated her retirement account's required minimum distribution, enough to buy two kitchen refrigerators for the center.

The physical transformation demanded as much ingenuity as the financing. Geotechnical testing found the soil beneath the barn unfit to support a permanent foundation, so crews lifted the entire 4,400-square-foot structure roughly seven feet into the air on cribbing and excavated beneath it, replacing the soil with engineered fill while the building hung suspended above. Interior support columns that would have interrupted classroom space were cut and replaced with large, engineered beams routed to new columns hidden inside hallway walls. Plan North Engineers' structural solutions retain the existing framework of the pole barn by leveraging value engineering to create a cost-effective design. On the after-school wing, eight column lines, including exterior wall supports, were removed so the crew could push roughly 40 feet of the building outward by 10 additional feet, a sequence of shoring, demolition, and beam installation that Dalrymple's superintendents monitored daily using new survey control points, since the original site survey turned out to be almost entirely unreliable.

Then came winter. Construction began in December, and the

concrete pour for the building's slab had to happen the week before Christmas, during a brief break in the weather. If they would have missed it, then grant deadlines would have been jeopardized for months. Crews ran more than two million BTUs of trailer-mounted diesel heat to keep the ground and curing concrete warm enough to work, while snow and ice regularly blew into the building through a roof under active reconstruction.

Budget pressure produced some of the building's most memorable details. An entryway ceiling of decorative wood slats, originally priced near $20,000, was reimagined by Dalrymple and Hoffman's team as a black suspended grid fitted with translucent-colored plexiglass panels, lit by the building's existing east-facing clerestory windows.

"It would just light up the walls every morning," Dalrymple recalls. "The kids, they come in, they have to go over and touch the walls. Just because of all the colors."

Down the hallway, hand-blown glass pendant lights, which were donated at a steep discount by a Seattle glassblower and friend of the Dalrymple's, replaced fixtures the budget couldn't otherwise support.

The New Meadows Child Development Center opened in September 2025, one year after groundbreaking, now housing an income-based daycare, a preschool with actual windows, an after-school program and offices for family and youth counseling, all beside a new community skate pavilion. The impact of these innovative features was evident from the very first day the building opened. The first child to walk through the doors looked up at the colorful lights and exclaimed to his parents, "I have always wanted to go to school here." That simple statement captured exactly what the project set out to achieve: transforming an ordinary former recycling building into a place where children feel excited, welcomed, and inspired from the moment they arrive.

For Mayor Good, the project reshaped what she believed a small town could pull off without industry, without a large tax base, and without going into debt.

"It takes a community to pull a project like this off," says Dalrymple. "And it would be big in Boise. For a town of roughly 1,000 residents, this is an unheard-of accomplishment." ●

A huge thank you goes out to the contractors and subtrades who made this project possible!

Contractor | Dalrymple Construction Services
Architect | GHm Architects
Civil Engineer | Akerman Estvold
Landscape Architect | Rodney Evans + Partners
Structural Engineer | Plan North Engineers
MEP | DC Engineering

SUBTRADES WHO WORKED ON THIS PROJECT

R&M Steel Company | JFM Steel Erectors | C&M Lumber Co. | C&N Electrical Construction
Hines Sight Plumbing | EnergySeal
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Rocky Mountain Signs | Valley Drywall | Misty O'loughlin
Brad Anderson | Shaun Burgess



A Navy Surplus Sewer Plant Finally Meets its End

Sandpoint bets millions on a wastewater overhaul

In the years after the Second World War, when the Navy's Farragut Naval Training Station on Lake Pend Oreille was declared surplus, Sandpoint acquired primary clarifiers and other components from the base in Bayview and hauled them north.

By Shayna Wiwierski

For more than 70 years, Sandpoint, a lakeside city of about 10,000 people, has treated its sewage with equipment that began its life somewhere else entirely.

In the years after the Second World War, when the Navy's Farragut Naval Training Station on Lake Pend Oreille was declared surplus, Sandpoint acquired primary clarifiers and other components from the base in Bayview and hauled them north. Photographs from the mid-1950s show workers fitting the salvaged machinery into what would become the city's own treatment plant. It was an improvised beginning, but a durable one. When the Clean Water Act imposed sweeping new standards on municipal sewage in 1972, the plant installed trickling filters to meet secondary treatment mandates. In 1983-84, the plant further upgraded to an activated sludge system.

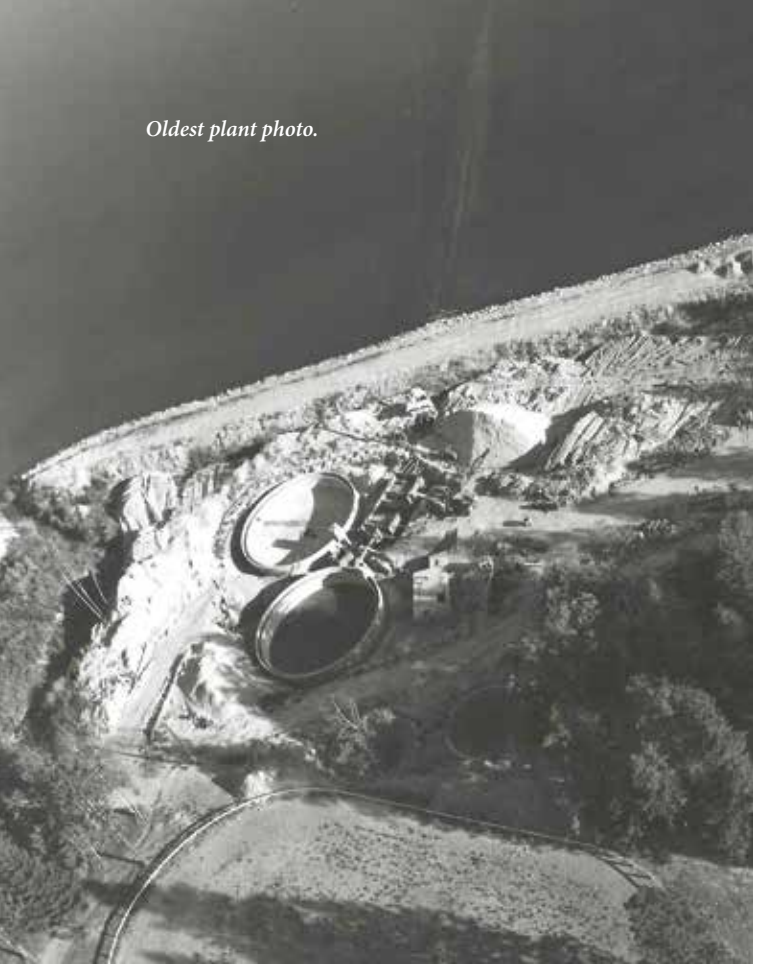
That good fortune did not last. By the 2000s, the plant's age had become its defining feature. Pumps, wiring, circuits, and motors from another era simply could not be replaced, because in many cases they were no longer made.

"They are literally walking around the plant every day, responding to critical breakdowns, failures, and literally disintegration of a plant that's well past its useful life," says Jeremy Grimm, Sandpoint's mayor, describing the operators who keep the facility running. He calls them "real-world MacGyvers."

Grimm made replacing the plant his top priority when he took office in 2024, after years in which the City had patched the facility together with what he called "bridge improvements" rather than confronting its age. A 2025 preliminary engineering report examined several treatment technologies, including a membrane-based system which provide a smaller footprint and conventional activated sludge plant. The conventional activated sludge alternative, Grimm says, would have pushed costs well past $130 million for a larger footprint. As of August 2026, CAS, MBR and wet-weather treatment are actively being reevaluated.

Complicating matters further, the new plant is being built on the same lakeshore site as the old one, beside a city park, meaning construction must proceed while the existing facility keeps running.

"It's like changing the tires on a car as you're going down the


Oldest plant photo.





The rebuild will replace nearly everything at the plant, including the administration building and laboratory, solids handling, disinfection system, odor control, headworks, primary treatment, and biological treatment, with one exception. The new plant is expected to replace the chlorine gas with either on-site generation or ultraviolet disinfection.

highway, or changing the wings on an airplane as you're flying," says Grimm.

The financing has proven just as complicated as the engineering. Federal grant support that small municipalities have long relied on for infrastructure, including state revolving loan funds through the Environmental Protection Agency, Rural Development financing, has been reduced, and Grimm says cuts affecting the City's federal partners left Sandpoint with a funding gap it had not anticipated. Voters responded last November by approving a bond measure by an 89 percent margin, which Grimm says, based on his own research, is the highest approval rating of any bond measure in Idaho's history.

Residents approved that bond knowing what was at stake: without substantial outside funding, monthly sewer rates for a single-family home would roughly double, from about $100 to about $200. Grimm says that increase would push water and sewer utility costs to roughly five percent of the median household income in Sandpoint, far above the two percent threshold at which state and federal agencies typically offer loan forgiveness. So far, the state has committed about $5.5 million in forgivable loans and direct legislative funding toward the $130 million project, which is a fraction of what is needed.

Much of that cost is driven not by ordinary daily flows but by a handful of extreme days each year. Sandpoint sits atop dense clay soil that absorbs almost no water, so during spring storms when warm rain falls on heavy snowpack, the city's collection system can carry as much as 10 million gallons of wastewater a day into the plant, which is more than five times the roughly 1.8 million gallons a day the system handles on a typical dry summer day. Those surges happen only about 12 to 15 days a year, Grimm says, but the plant's preliminary design had to be sized for them anyway, since permit limits apply regardless of the weather. The City has already spent millions over the past two decades lining over 25 percent of the systems' mainline pipes, replacing laterals, and testing for leaks to reduce the intrusion of ground and surface water into its sewer lines, work that engineers say has largely exhausted its returns.

The City is also evaluating a wet-weather treatment approach that could significantly affect the scope and cost of the project. During infrequent peak wet-weather events, flows exceeding the capacity of average daily treatment process could be routed through a separate treatment process designed specifically for





Design and construction solicitations are expected in early spring of 2027.

those conditions. Any such approach would require review and approval by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and meet applicable water-quality and effluent requirements.

If approved, the approach could allow the City's average daily treatment system to be sized for normal flows rather than for the highest short-duration wet-weather flows. The City is currently evaluating what that design capacity should be, along with the treatment processes necessary to manage peak flows and accommodate the City's projected 20-year growth. The evaluation may also make membrane-based treatment more feasible. Because membrane systems can require a smaller footprint, that alternative could allow more of the new treatment system to be constructed on open portions of the existing site before existing facilities are taken out of service.

The rebuild will replace nearly everything at the plant, including the administration building and laboratory, solids handling, disinfection system, odor control, headworks, primary treatment, and biological treatment, with one exception. New dewatering equipment is going in this winter under an earlier bridge project, after the plant's (40-year-old) belt presses began falling apart. The City considered relocating the facility about a mile and a half away but abandoned the idea. The site sits far below the rest of the gravity-fed collection system, roughly 22 feet down by the time sewage arrives, and pumping it uphill and back would have been costly, on top of the difficulty of siting a new sewage plant near a different neighborhood.

Among the changes residents may notice least is the one Grimm considers most urgent. The plant currently disinfects wastewater using chlorine gas, stored on-site in quantities. Grimm says the existing system presents a safety concern and that replacing it is a key priority. The new plant is expected to replace the chlorine gas with either on-site generation or ultraviolet disinfection.

Design and construction solicitations are expected in early spring of 2027, managed under a construction manager/general contractor arrangement that Grimm says is intended, in part, to rebuild public confidence. A recent City survey found that while 83 percent of residents understood the need for a new plant, only 11 percent were confident the project would be managed responsibly.

"We look forward to moving on to our design element," Grimm says, "and encourage capable and qualified firms and parties to watch along and engage where they would like." ●

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THE GATE CODE IS

6 4 8

The foreman's note gives SIX.
The site-plan route ends on 4.
The missing crate contains 8 padlocks.

1 FOREMAN'S NOTE T becomes S, J becomes I, and Y becomes X: SIX = 6.

2 SITE PLAN Start at 6. The route visits 9, 2, 7, 1, 8, then 4.

3 DELIVERY TICKET Four crates total 20. 20 - (3 + 5 + 4) = 8.

OPTIONAL HINTS

1: Try the letter immediately before T. 2: North is toward the top of the page.
3: Add the three visible quantities, then subtract from 20.

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Where the River Returns

Building The Park at Expo Idaho from the ground up



The project includes an all-wheel skate garden designed by California Skateparks, the internationally recognized firm behind the skateboarding venue for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.





Rather than export excavated soil, material from the Lowlands is reused to construct the "ridges," elevated landforms that create circulation routes, overlooks, and higher ground for recreation.

For decades, the former Les Bois Park site sat as a flat reminder of its horseracing past. Today, it is being reshaped into something entirely different; a place where water will move through the land again, children will climb and explore, skaters and riders will find terrain built for every skill level, and families will gather along the Boise River. Bringing that vision to life is anything but simple.

Across the first phase of The Park at Expo Idaho, owner Ada County has assembled a highly collaborative team led by PORT, with CM Company as general contractor and key trade partners including earthwork contractor Lurre Construction, Lowlands contractor RIVHAB, landscape contractor Franz Witte, skate park contractor American Ramp, and playground contractor Garrett's Park and Play. Together, the team is building wetlands, stream channels, ridgelines, trails, structures, recreation features, and an entirely new landscape; all beside an active Expo Idaho campus and greenbelt, and on a demanding schedule.

The largest construction operation is reshaping the site itself. Portions of the

Boise River floodplain were filled and leveled decades ago for the racetrack. The new park reverses that condition by excavating the "Lowlands," a 19-acre ecological core with more than 2,000 feet of stream channels. Lurre Construction is performing major earthwork across the site, while RIVHAB is constructing specialized Lowlands elements including side channels, wetlands, riparian areas, stream features, log structures, and cobble-lined channels. Elevations must work precisely with water movement, habitat, trails, bridges, and planting zones.

Rather than export excavated soil, material from the Lowlands is reused to construct the "ridges," elevated landforms that create circulation routes, overlooks, and higher ground for recreation. One massive earthwork operation therefore creates both sides of





The Nature Playground and Play Pavilion are taking shape with log scrambles, boulder gardens, climbing walls, ropes, swings, water play, and a 37-foot slide.

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Once complete, visitors will experience streams, wetlands, ridges, trails, skating, play and gathering spaces that feel as though they belong together.



Wetland development.

Nearby, the Nature Playground and Play Pavilion are taking shape with log scrambles, boulder gardens, climbing walls, ropes, swings, water play, and a 37-foot slide.

the park's story: restoring the floodplain below while building a new experience above.

That experience includes an all-wheel skate garden designed by California Skateparks, the internationally recognized firm behind the skateboarding venue for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. American Ramp is bringing that design to life, constructing specialized concrete terrain for skateboards, bikes, scooters, and roller skates. Bowls, transitions, and other features require unique and precise concrete formwork and finishing, while surrounding grades, trails, and landscaping must connect seamlessly.

Nearby, the Nature Playground and Play Pavilion are taking shape with log scrambles, boulder gardens, climbing walls, ropes, swings, water play, and a 37-foot slide. Franz Witte's landscape work will ultimately knit these constructed elements into the larger park, with more than 1,000,000 native plants across the site.

For Ada County senior project manager, Josh Brown, the goal is "entire family engagement," creating a place where different generations can arrive together and each find their own experience. That idea gives heart to the complexity unfolding on site. Heavy civil earthwork, ecological restoration, specialized concrete, structures, recreation features, and landscape installation are not separate projects; they are pieces of one shared place.

The approximately $38.5 million first phase began construction in early 2025. With Expo Idaho remaining active, CM Company continues to coordinate construction access, deliveries, public events, specialized trades, and a schedule tied to federal American Rescue Plan Act funding.



Overall construction aerial showing the Lowlands, ridges and scale of the active site.

When construction is complete, much of that complexity should disappear. Visitors will simply experience streams, wetlands, ridges, trails, skating, play and gathering spaces that feel as though they belong together. Behind that effortless experience will be the work of Ada County, PORT, CM Company, Lurre Construction, RIVHAB, Franz Witte, American Ramp, Garret's Park and Play, and many additional partners, a team transforming a former racetrack into a place designed to reconnect people with the Boise River, with nature and, ultimately, with one another. ●

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The 15-Minute Year-End Reset

By Catherine Monsey, Sr. Coordinator, Human Capital Consulting, OmniaHR a Division of Alliant

A SIMPLE WAY TO TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

As the year winds down, your to-do list may seem to grow faster than you can finish it. Year-end deadlines, employee questions, planning meetings, performance conversations, holiday schedules, and unexpected requests can quickly compete for your attention.

One simple habit can help: take 15 minutes at the beginning of each day to decide what deserves your time.

START WITH YOUR DAILY TOP THREE

Before opening your inbox or jumping into meetings, identify the three tasks that would make the biggest difference if completed today.

Your list might include completing an important employee matter, preparing for a year-end meeting, reviewing a compliance deadline, finalizing a 2027 planning priority, or following up on a decision that is holding up progress.

Keep the list realistic. The goal is to identify the work that truly needs your attention, not create another overwhelming list.

WHEN SOMETHING NEW ARRIVES, PAUSE BEFORE YOU RESPOND

Year-end rarely goes according to plan. A new email arrives. Someone needs an answer. A meeting gets added. An unexpected issue suddenly feels urgent.



Before changing direction, run the request through three questions:

1. Impact: What could happen if this is delayed or left unresolved?

2. Importance: Does this support an HR or business priority?

3. Urgency: What happens if it waits until tomorrow?

Then decide what happens next:

Do now: It is urgent, important, and has meaningful impact.

Defer: It matters, but it can be scheduled for later.

Delegate: Someone else can handle it with a clear outcome and deadline.

Delete: It no longer adds enough value to justify the time.

A useful question when everything seems urgent is:

"What is the real impact if this waits until tomorrow?"

If the answer is minimal, schedule it instead of allowing it to take over your current priority.

PROTECT TIME FOR IMPORTANT WORK

Some of the work that matters most at year-end does not arrive with an urgent subject line. Planning, employee development, process improvements, documentation, and preparation for the new year are easy to postpone.

Set aside at least one protected focus block on your calendar. Even 30 minutes of uninterrupted time can help you make meaningful progress. Close email and messaging notifications and focus on one priority during that block.

Leave room for the unexpected

A calendar packed from morning to afternoon leaves little room when priorities change.

Build short buffers between meetings and major tasks. Use that time to handle a pressing issue, prepare for the next conversation, finish a task, or simply reset before moving on.

A little breathing room can prevent one unexpected request from disrupting the rest of the day.

TRY THE RESET TOMORROW

Set a timer for 15 minutes and identify:

1. Your three most important tasks for the day
2. One task you can defer
3. One task you can delegate
4. One task you can remove
5. One focus block you will protect

Small adjustments can make the final months of the year feel more manageable and help you finish with greater clarity. ●


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