



In January 2010, **NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION** (NWF) and **JOBS FOR THE FUTURE** (JFF) joined forces to spur innovation in the role of community colleges to meet the demand for a skilled workforce with sustainability skills in key career and technical occupations. With support from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, The Greenforce Initiative:

- > Strengthens workforce development and sustainability practices at community colleges;
- > Enables lower-skilled adults to advance their sustainability and STEM skills;
- > Enables adults to access jobs and career pathways in high-demand occupations within their local communities.

100 community college partners in six geographic regions are active in The Greenforce Initiative, serving over 8,000 lower-skilled and other nontraditional workers.

WHY NOW?

As the United States rebuilds its economy, businesses are relying more on innovation and operational efficiency to survive, and want workers who can contribute to these goals. Adding sustainability-based skills and credentials on top of core STEM skills increases marketability for jobseekers in today's competitive environment. Preparing workers to thrive in a leaner, more sustainable economy is a critical mission that The Greenforce Initiative seeks to address.

For those on the margins of our economy—lower-skilled and low-income workers and young adults, many from groups underrepresented in higher education—community colleges are the primary route to the middle-skill, family-supporting occupations and careers that the emerging sustainable economy is generating. Community colleges can be drivers in creating local “workforce partnerships,” bringing together employers, workforce development organizations, unions, and other community stakeholders. Such partnerships are key to ensuring that workers gain the sustainability skills that fill employer needs and lead to the career pathways they desire.

SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS THAT LEAD TO CAREERS

The Greenforce Initiative strengthens the capacity of community colleges to enhance quality pathways that lead to careers in multiple industry sectors. Building on the combined experience of NWF and JFF in environmental sustainability and workforce development, respectively, this commitment provides high-impact assistance to community colleges in targeted regions across the United States.

By focusing on sustainability and STEM skills, The Greenforce Initiative assists community colleges in helping students

access and advance within careers in a variety of industry sectors. Across the six regions of the initiative, we have worked with community colleges, workforce development professionals, and employers to identify growing sectors, including:

- > Energy efficiency;
- > Advanced manufacturing;
- > Renewable energy and energy storage;
- > Sustainable agriculture;
- > Engineering technology;
- > Transportation, distribution and logistics; and
- > Construction.

In addition, The Greenforce Initiative is starting to use cutting-edge labor market data to provide community colleges in our regional networks with real-time employer requirements, enabling them to better focus on key employment needs in their communities.

GREENFORCE INITIATIVE REGIONS

The Greenforce Initiative works in six regions across the country:

- > Chicago, IL
- > Michigan
- > North Carolina
- > Seattle, WA
- > South Texas
- > Virginia

For more information on the activities in each region, please visit www.greenforceinitiative.org.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR RESULTS

The Greenforce Initiative connects employers and educators to determine what skills are needed to advance lower-skilled and other nontraditional workers. The earliest activities of The Greenforce Initiative focused on making these connections and strengthening the capacity of community colleges to implement or refine quality career pathways in the sustainable workforce. These early activities included:

- > Developing strategic community college consortia—bringing together networks of community colleges in key regions to share practical approaches for implementing green career training programs;
- > Increasing employer involvement in training programs;
- > Developing strategic partnerships with key stakeholders beyond employers, including regional workforce and sustainable development leaders;
- > Promoting innovation in career pathways and sustainability skills education through nationwide mini-grants (see *sidebar*); and
- > Raising the visibility of community colleges as leaders in creating a skilled workforce in a more sustainable economy.

DOING WHAT WORKS

The Greenforce Initiative is now taking the next step by leveraging these connections to expand best practices around employer engagement and elevate successful models of skills training to prepare and advance workers. In our ongoing work across the six regions, we are developing a **Sustainable Economy Workforce Champions Network** to focus on employer engagement practices and better serve community needs by:

- > Creating and distributing customized sustainable economy labor market information reports;

- > Conducting and disseminating state and local audits around policies, economic development plans, and other workforce development priorities;
- > Identifying sectors and occupations for an increased focus based on local demand;
- > Working with college partners to target gaps in sustainability skills and career pathways; and
- > Engaging employers in the identified growth sectors.

By meeting the needs of those most directly involved with the implementation of occupational skills development and sustainability education, The Greenforce Initiative continues to strengthen the capacity of community colleges to train workers for the sustainable jobs that exist today.

INNOVATION GRANTS

The Greenforce Initiative has awarded 26 mini-grants totaling over \$75,000 with the purpose of seeding innovation and advancing campus projects among participating community colleges. Examples of innovation grants include: assessing local employers in the sustainable economy; engaging students in developing green model homes in lower-income areas; professional development and up-skilling for college faculty; and preparing students to serve as community sustainability guides.

FUNDERS

Bank of America Charitable Foundation

PARTNERS

Jobs for the Future
National Wildlife Federation



TEL 703.438.6322
11100 Wildlife Center Drive, Reston, VA 20190
WWW.NWF.ORG



National Wildlife Federation has a 20-year history of working with colleges and universities through its Campus Ecology program to improve their overall green educational programming and onsite sustainability. Its student outreach programs, campus consulting, climate action competition, and educational events and resources reach about 1,000 campuses each year.



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

TEL 617.728.4446 FAX 617.728.4857 info@jff.org

88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110
122 C Street, NW, Suite 650, Washington, DC 20001

WWW.JFF.ORG



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