

Green Jobs Task Force

The Green Jobs Task Force seeks a Department of Labor (DOL) grant program that nonprofit greening organizations can apply for to create jobs. The purpose of the legislation is to create jobs in the green industry and put the “green” back into green jobs. The green industry is an annual \$40 billion market and growing. Developing a workforce to keep pace is becoming more critical to our economic every day.

Green solutions to stormwater management and reducing urban heat island effect are cost-effective strategies now, and will only become more important as global warming consequences like more intense rains and higher average temperatures become the norm. In addition, studies have proven the social and health benefits of increased greenery in an urban context.

Green collar jobs are family-supporting jobs that contribute significantly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality. This includes jobs such as greenroof installation and maintenance, tree care/arboriculture, brownfield remediation, urban forestry design and maintenance, wetland/estuary restoration, and stream bank stabilization.

DOL

- Create the Green Jobs Program with related guidelines. Mandate that all agencies that receive federal funds from this program implement the latest Green Jobs Program guidelines. Consultation during the development of these guidelines must be provided by Technical Advisory Committees that are composed of local green jobs providers.
- Provide incentives for greening organization to establish job training programs aimed at “repairing the whole person” by assisting and preparing individuals into work in a green industry.
- Create public-private partnerships to build and expand workforce development programs. Look to quasi-governmental organizations such as state urban forestry councils to fill this role.
- Designate an applicable DOL department to collect information- or fund a national NGO such as the Alliance for Community Trees to create a reporting method that includes detail such as: cost to run program per individual, nationwide labor market data on the green industries workforce needs, trends, and job growth, existing urban forestry data related to neighborhoods and municipalities benefiting from this program. Require states and other participating agencies to include an annual review that:
 - Compares the number of jobs created, state/municipal unemployment rate, tree canopy cover, and other relevant metrics.
 - Outlines a 10-year plan for identifying and linking green collar job opportunities with state workforce development training outreach opportunities.

- Designates a staff member responsible for tracking and educating intra-agency, partnering agencies, and local citizens.
- Encourage DOL to develop working partnerships that are aimed at increasing understanding of and communication with national and local urban forest organizations.

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Implementation

- Create incentives that give preference to specific populations such as at-risk youth, displaced workers, formerly incarcerated individuals, and others facing barriers to employment. One approach could be to award grants on a competitive basis, and award points for location priority.
- Require states to give priority in awarding grants to organizations that work with high percentages of at-risk youth, displaced workers, formerly incarcerated individuals, and others facing barriers to employment, with additional points for more rigorous standards such as school absences due to asthma and hospital admissions and mortalities due to air quality.
- Establish incentives for community development corporations, social work programs, and prisons to participate. In some ways, social issues are more of a challenge than actually finding a job. For example, the challenges of re-entering the job force include learning how to get to work on time, manage transportation logistics, and issues presenting at home. It is necessary to make sure that support is available in this green collar jobs program.
- Require participating states to revise their workforce development agency guidelines to waive nonprofit greening organizations from needing an educational license, or at minimum stipulate reasonable requirements by which nonprofit greening organizations may obtain a state educational license. In the case of the latter, states shall also designate how many and what type of educational credits are to be awarded for individuals completing said training program.

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Funding

- Incentives may be loans or grants to states or municipalities. Administered by Department of Labor.
- Estimating that this program will cost \$1,000 – 5,000 per person in print materials and staff time.
- Establish a federal revolving loan fund for public-private green collar jobs partnerships, and/or offer a federal match to municipalities with revolving loan funds for such projects.
- Require a cost sharing match of 80/20 (federal to state/municipal/other non-Federal funds).

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Other General Policy Ideas

- Green Jobs Act of 2007: Authorized in 2007, this federal program will pay for 30,000 people a year to get training in green trades - like solar panel installation and home weatherization.
- Establish a training facility in each state that trains the future green employees that businesses, governments, and nonprofits can hire from directly.
- Could also be a Department of Justice program, especially if focusing on post-release, ex-offenders, or neighborhoods heavily impacted by a large post-release population or high unemployment.
- This could fit as an extension of AmeriCorps.

- Expand criteria under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to encourage investments in green community redevelopment efforts. Integrated neighborhood planning and efforts that promote the creation of green collar jobs should all receive specific and additional credits in compliance with the CRA.

- Potential Partners and Models:
 - Sustainable South Bronx
 - Chicago’s GreenCorps
 - Green-Collar Cities: Has helped elected officials and grassroots activists create green-collar jobs in numerous cities, including Seattle, Atlanta, and Newark.
 - Green For All Academy: In partnership with Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection, our Green For All Academy will be training hundreds of grassroots advocates (most from disadvantaged communities) for a green-collar economy.
 - Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee Hearing (5/21/08) to examine efforts to create jobs with climate solutions, focusing on the ways agriculture and forestry can help lower costs in a low-carbon economy.
 - Clean Energy Corps: Working to propose a new federal program called the Clean Energy Corps for America. This \$30 billion initiative would put 600,000 people to work retrofitting millions of buildings, so that the structures waste less energy. Paid for by an innovative revolving loan fund, the program would capture subsequent savings in energy costs and essentially pay for itself.

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