



Tree Equity Handbook

A Practical Guide to Closing the Canopy Gap Between Neighborhoods

ACTIVITY 5.1

→ Networking for Workforce Development

Toolkit 5: Develop a Workforce

Issued November 2025





Activity Map

**Networking for
Workforce Development**

→ Workforce Review

→ Workforce Operations
Action Planning

→ Workforce Trainings

→ Building the Future
Through K-12 Engagement

Activity 5.1: Networking for Workforce Development

Toolkit 5

Develop a Workforce

Urban forests depend on a skilled workforce to thrive. With an increasingly urgent need to close the Tree Equity gap, this moment offers an opportunity to recruit and train a new generation of urban forestry professionals who better reflect the communities where Tree Equity is most needed.

Start by building a network of workforce partners, then assess your community's workforce landscape to identify concrete actions your coalition can take to build awareness, train workers and cultivate a robust ecosystem of Tree Equity professionals.

Networking for Workforce Development



Overview & Basic Steps

Workforce development in urban forestry should be treated as a shared responsibility, not a siloed effort. You'll need to work with trusted community partners to identify potential candidates, employers committed to inclusive hiring and retention, training organizations that can build workers' skills and service providers to help potential workers overcome barriers to employment. With a strong network, you can not only connect people to opportunity but also foster broader buy-in and collaboration that is essential for advancing Tree Equity.

Suggested Time: 4 weeks

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Participants: Led by core program partners with input from diverse community and workforce networks

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- A Stakeholder Inventory and Map → [Activity 2.1](#)

Instructions

- 1** Track potential partners and build your network using the **Workforce Partners List Worksheet** → [page 9](#)
- 2** (Optional) Develop a full contact database using the [Contact List you developed in Activity 2.4](#)
- 3** Build a **Workforce Committee** to coordinate collaboration and long-term workforce strategies → [page 14](#)

After you complete this activity:

- Convene your Workforce Committee to conduct a Workforce Review and develop clear recommendations. → [Activity 5.2](#)
- Begin planning actions to launch or scale up workforce initiatives. → [Activity 5.3](#)

What Does a Sustainable and Equitable Workforce Look Like?



A sustainable workforce doesn't just mean jobs; it represents a comprehensive system that provides lasting opportunities to strengthen both people and place. This type of workforce is built on strong collaboration, adaptability and equity. To ensure that the growth of this workforce benefits all communities, it should include:

- **Partnerships that connect training to employment:** Employers, educators and community organizations coordinate to ensure that the skills participants gain lead to meaningful, long-term employment opportunities.
- **Recruitment from underinvested or underserved neighborhoods:** Workforce pathways intentionally reach those most affected by inequitable access to green jobs.
- **Strong job training and employer placement programs:** Participants gain practical skills and experience that lead to success in tree care, urban forestry and related green careers.
- **Supportive services:** Wraparound services address real-life barriers — like transportation, childcare, or access to resources — so participants can fully engage and thrive in training and employment.
- **Connections with justice-serving programs:** Justice-involved individuals often face barriers to reemployment, but many bring valuable skills applicable to tree care, landscape maintenance and green infrastructure. Partnering with reentry or transitional job programs can help fill critical workforce gaps while advancing community reintegration and stability.

Laying the Foundation

Developing a sustainable urban forestry workforce starts with relationships. As you map your local network and connect with partners, consider the following questions:

- **Who might be an asset?** Look beyond your usual circles for new partners from different sectors who may not yet see themselves as a part of the urban forestry field.
- **What do we gain by connecting?** Cross-sector partnerships can open new doors by bringing diverse funding sources, cross-sector buy-in and shared accountability.
- **What impact could we have together?** The goal is to build a resilient pipeline of urban forestry professionals equipped to advance long-term Tree Equity goals. The stronger your network, the better you can sustain progress through changing times.

TOOLKIT 5: Develop a Workforce | Activity 1 – WORKSHEET

Build Your Workforce Partners Network

Building your workforce network is not just about listing partners; it's about identifying who holds influence, who can create access and how your collaborations can advance equity. Your workforce network should consist of various players: you will need trusted partners to help you source great candidates, provide job training, offer wraparound support and hire and retain workers. Explore partnerships with correctional reentry offices, community justice organizations or local workforce boards that specialize in reintegration services.

Reentry and transitional programs play a vital role across all five key partner categories; see the list below. Each of these areas can include direct or indirect support for justice-involved people transitioning back into the workforce. Where that support does not yet exist, it can become a point of conversation and opportunity for growth. Engaging reentry-focused partners strengthens the entire workforce ecosystem by connecting overlooked talent with meaningful green career pathways.

Use our step-by-step process to build your network in five key categories:

- Community recruitment partners
- Workforce training partners
- Wraparound service providers
- Employers
- Amplifiers

Then compile all potential partners in the **Workforce Partners List Worksheet** → [page 9](#).

A worker cleans up branches as part of the WorkForest Initiative in San Antonio, TX.



Megan Smith/American Youthworks

Community Recruitment Partners

Urban forestry remains an unfamiliar career path to many, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. (See [Activity 1.1](#)) for guidance on using Tree Equity Score data to identify neighborhood-level disparities.) Collaborate with trusted pillars of the community to recruit promising candidates – people with the lived experience, passion and potential to succeed in urban forestry careers.

Types of Community Partners	Search Tips
Frontline Community Organizations	Use terms like “community development nonprofit,” “neighborhood association,” “environmental justice group” or “grassroots organization” along with your city name. Check your city’s nonprofit directories or 211 resources. Search LinkedIn for people with roles in “community outreach” or “community engagement.”
Faith-Based Institutions	Look up “interfaith council,” “church community programs,” “faith-based job training” or “religious outreach initiatives” in your city. You can also check directories from United Way, local dioceses or mosque/temple/church leadership groups.
Local Schools and School-Based Advocates	Use LinkedIn or school district websites to find titles like “career counselor,” “school community liaison” or “CTE coordinator.” Search for “youth workforce programs,” “Opportunity Youth programs” or “school-to-career” initiatives in your area.
Cultural Centers and Advocacy Groups	Try keywords like “immigrant resources center,” “Latinx advocacy,” “Black cultural center,” “Asian American services” or “multicultural youth programs.” Check your local library, municipal cultural affairs department or local ethnic chambers of commerce.
Reentry and Transitional Workforce Programs	Use keywords like “reentry workforce program,” “transitional jobs,” “returning citizens employment” or “workforce development for justice-involved individuals” when searching local directories or LinkedIn.

Examples of Community Partners (Boston)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| GreenRoots Chelsea | The Boston Foundation |
| The Emerald Necklace Conservancy | Boston Urban Forest Friends |
| Dorchester Bay EDC | Span, Inc. (Reentry support) |
| Fenway CDC | Green Guardians (International) |

Compile partners in the **Workforce Partners List Worksheet** → [page 9](#).

Wraparound Service Providers

Wraparound services provide the extra support people need to access, stay in and succeed in job training and employment, especially when facing barriers beyond the workplace. Examples include:

- Transportation or childcare assistance
- Stipends, tools or equipment for trainees
- Career coaching and mentorship
- Help connecting to housing or social services
- Mental health and wellness support

Wraparound service providers may include:

- Housing organizations
- Community health centers
- Food assistance programs
- Childcare providers
- Mental health and wellness support services
- Financial literacy and legal aid programs
- Career coaching and mentorship initiatives
- Case management
- Legal support

Find regional wraparound service providers through resources like United Way networks, local nonprofit directories and public health departments.

Examples of Wraparound Service Providers (Boston)

Project Hope Boston

Action for Boston Community Development

Seven Hills Foundation and Affiliates

United Way of Massachusetts Bay

Community Resources for Justice

The Center for Employment Opportunities
(National)

Compile partners in the **Workforce Partners List Worksheet** → [page 9](#).

Employers

Securing employers who commit to inclusive hiring and retention is a key step in building a strong, equitable workforce. Look for organizations from different sectors that value diversity, invest in training and advancement, and create accessible career pathways.

Sector	Potential Employers
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, colleges and universities • Health care institutions • Public health organizations • Museums and other institutional holdings
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers • Tree care companies • Green infrastructure and landscaping companies • Environmental consulting companies • Utility vegetation management contractors
Nonprofit Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental or urban forestry–focused nonprofits • Environmental justice organizations • Workforce development organizations • Land trusts and conservation groups
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town/city/county government • Primary urban forestry department • Supporting departments • Regional planning authority • State/federal agencies

Compile partners in the **Workforce Partners List Worksheet** → [page 9](#).

Amplifiers

Your network should include partners who can amplify your impact. Marketing and storytelling raise awareness about workforce needs, training opportunities and success stories — all of which will help you draw in new partners, funders and participants. Policy and funding connections help turn that momentum into lasting change by shaping programs and funding sources that support green careers.

Media/marketing — who can help tell your story?

- **Local media:** Journalists, radio and news outlets
- **Advertising partners:** Print, digital, TV, outdoor or event sponsorships
- **Storytelling platforms:** Podcasts, film and social media
- **Community voices:** Social media influencers, sports teams and local brands

Policy and funding advocates — who can help shape policy and funding?

- Local and state policymakers (city council members, mayors and agency staff)
- Workforce and economic development offices
- Environmental and labor advocates
- Education and training institutions
- Environmental justice coalitions
- Urban forestry policy groups
- Philanthropic organizations

Compile partners in the **Workforce Partners List Worksheet** below.

Workforce Partners List Worksheet

Inventory all potential partners in one place to keep track of the full landscape of connections and opportunities. A well-rounded network is the foundation of a coordinated, equity-centered and sustainable urban forestry workforce pipeline.



<p>Community Recruitment Partners</p>	
<p>Workforce Training Providers</p>	
<p>Wraparound Service Providers</p>	



<p>Reentry and Transitional Programs</p>	
<p>Employers – Institutions</p>	
<p>Employers – Private Sector</p>	
<p>Employers – Nonprofit Sector</p>	
<p>Employers – Government</p>	

Worksheet continued on next page.



Amplifiers – Media/ Marketing	
Amplifiers – Policy and Funding Advocates	

Tip: To stay organized, assign each partner a contact stage (e.g., “identified,” “contacted,” “confirmed” or “active”) to monitor relationship progress.

Develop a Contact Database

Keep track of essential details about each contact — such as their affiliation, job title, email address, focus area and potential contribution — in a single, centralized document or spreadsheet. You can use the editable spreadsheet template provided online (see [Activity 2.4](#)) or design your own version that fits your team’s workflow.

How to use the contact list template:

- 1. Enter your contacts.** Add each partner’s name, organization, email, phone number and focus area. Skip any columns that are not relevant.
- 2. Define roles.** In the Roles tab, you can edit the roles to include workforce-specific options:
 - Candidate Recruitment Partner
 - Workforce Training Provider
 - Wraparound Service Provider
 - Employer
 - Media/Marketing
 - Policy Advocates
 - Funder

3. Categorize. Add labels to each contact to define their sector and role to keep your contact list organized.

- When you click on the “Roles” column, your customized list will appear in a dropdown menu.
- Note: The “Sectors” tab is read-only and contains definitions of the business and organization types within each sector.

4. Track engagement. Use the blue columns to record outreach activity:

- Contacted? (Yes/No)
- Response received? (Yes/No)
- Notes from meeting
- Date of last contact
- Follow-up needed

Tips for maintaining an effective contact list:

- **Prioritize relationship building.** Don’t just collect names. Connect with people personally to learn about their goals, priorities and capacity to contribute.
- **Follow up consistently.** Use your contact list to track outreach and schedule periodic check-ins. Regular outreach helps you build momentum, nurture relationships, provide updates and solicit feedback or support.
- **Review diversity and inclusion.** Audit your list quarterly to ensure representation across race, gender and community demographics.
- **Visualize your network.** Use color-coding or filters to show outreach progress.
- **Regularly update your records.** Relationships evolve. Keep your list current by noting staff transitions and new opportunities for collaboration.

Optional enhancement: Add a column for “Impact Area” (e.g., Workforce Equity, Youth Engagement, Climate Resilience) to help visualize which partnerships contribute to your strategic goals.

Tips for first-time users:

- Start small by adding 10–15 priority partners that you already have relationships with.
- Identify gaps (e.g., few training providers or employers of color) and set a goal to fill them within six months.
- Revisit and update your contact list before every quarterly or biannual workforce planning meeting.

This page shows elements of the Contact List but is not a worksheet. To work on your own list, download the editable spreadsheet from our website.

Contact List Template:
[TE_Handbook_Contact_List_Template.xlsx](#)

➔ The **Contact List tab** includes columns for coalitions members' basic information, including pre-selected options for their sector and role.

1	Affiliation	Name (Point of Contact)	Title	Email	Phone	Sector	Role	Notes
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								

➔ This tab also includes space for you to track contact history and status (blue columns).

1	Contacted?	Response Status	Areas of Interest					
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								

➔ The **Roles and Sectors tabs** include the defined roles you will use in the Contact List tab. Feel free to edit and add to the Roles list as needed. The Sectors tab is not meant to be edited, but includes more detailed information about the types of businesses, groups or organizations that commonly fall into each sector.

	A	B	C
1	Core Team/Steering Committee		
2	Anchor Organization		
3	Champion/Influencer		
4	General Coalition Member		
5	Add more in "Roles (editable)" tab...		
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

1	Government	Town/city/county government Primary urban forestry department Supporting departments Advisory bodies (committees, boards, commissions) Regional planning authority State/federal agencies Elected and appointed officials State urban & community forestry coordinator State urban & community forestry volunteer coordinator	
2	Community Organization	Community organizations (environmental, social justice, community development) Environmental groups/organizations Environmental advocates Economic development organizations Community foundations	
3	Community Group	Affected residents Neighborhoods associations Homeowner, condominium, renter associations and forums Community advocacy & activist groups Marginalized groups Community development advocates	
	Institution	Schools, colleges, and universities School leadership and committees Educational associations Healthcare institutions such as hospitals, clinics or medical centers Public health organizations Religious organizations, faith leaders	

	Instructions
1	1. Enter a point of contact and all their contact information.
2	2. Add a pre-defined Sector to keep your contact list organized. To add a sector, click directly on the cell you want to edit to access the spreadsheet. This tab is not meant to be edited.
3	3. Add a defined Role to keep your contact list organized. To add a role, click directly on the cell you want to edit to access a spreadsheet. Edit the list in this tab to add additional roles to the dropdown in the Contact List tab.
4	4. In the blue columns, keep track of who has been contacted, who has responded, notes, and areas of interest related to Co
5	

Create a Workforce Committee

You've now mapped your workforce network and begun cultivating relationships. Along the way you've likely identified a clear picture of who is engaged, who holds influence and who can help sustain collaboration. The next step is to create a Workforce Committee — a small, representative group of people best positioned to build relationships, drive collaboration, make strategic decisions and turn your workforce goals into action.

Why build a Workforce Committee?

Workforce development is all about connecting the dots. A focused, passionate, collaborative committee helps coordinate efforts across sectors and ensures that programs remain inclusive, responsive and community driven.

Your Workforce Committee can:

- Coordinate training and upskilling programs
- Connect employers with qualified candidates
- Recruit and support candidates through trusted networks
- Develop inclusive career pathways and promote advancement
- Identify and address workforce gaps and labor shortages
- Strengthen retention through wraparound services, mentorship and career coaching
- Advocate for policy and funding that sustain green workforce opportunities

Selecting Members for Your Committee

Build a committee that reflects the full spectrum of your urban forestry ecosystem.

Who to include:

- Representatives from all key perspectives: candidates, employers, educators, training providers, wraparound service providers and other community partners
- Individuals with professional expertise and personal commitment to workforce equity
- Members who reflect the communities you serve, including different backgrounds, lived experiences and perspectives

Qualities to look for:

- Strong communication skills and leadership
- Cultural competence
- Strategic and systems-level thinking
- Deep community connections
- Organizational or facilitation skills
- Subject-matter expertise (e.g., arboriculture, urban forestry, youth programs, DEI, workforce policy)

Remember: The best representative isn't always the executive director. They might be a program manager, community organizer or field supervisor with on-the-ground insight.

How to Recruit Committee Members

1. Identify potential members from your Workforce Partners List ([page 9](#)).
2. Reach out personally to schedule a one-on-one conversation or call to discuss:
 - a. The committee's purpose and goals;
 - b. How their expertise supports community impact;
 - c. Expected time commitment (meeting frequency, duration, working groups); and
 - d. Benefits of participation (shared learning, visibility, networking, collaboration)/
3. Set expectations clearly through a written plan or short terms-of-reference document.
4. Ensure reciprocity by having participants contribute to and gain from the committee's work.

Committee Structure and Operations

A well-structured committee operates efficiently and inclusively.

Recommended structure:

- Chair/co-chairs: Facilitate meetings, coordinate agenda setting and ensure follow-up
- Coordinator/staff lead: Handles logistics, communication and record keeping
- Members: Participate in discussions, contribute expertise and represent sector perspectives

Suggested cadence:

- Quarterly meetings for planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Working groups (when needed) for focused topics like youth engagement, employer outreach or policy alignment
- Annual review to update membership, evaluate progress, and refine goals.

Note: Keep meetings solution-oriented. Begin with progress updates, assign clear next steps and celebrate wins.



Activity 5.1: Networking for Workforce Development

Toolkit 5: Develop a Workforce

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