



Tree Equity Handbook

A Practical Guide to Closing the Canopy Gap Between Neighborhoods

ACTIVITY 5.3

→ Workforce Operations Action Planning

**Toolkit 5:
Develop a Workforce**

Issued November 2025



Activity Map

→ [Networking for Workforce Development](#)

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Activity 5.3: Workforce Operations Action Planning

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.

Workforce Operations Action Planning



Overview & Basic Steps

Whether you and your partners are new to the field or expanding existing efforts, understanding your current strengths and limitations will help you identify concrete actions you can take to build workforce initiatives that align with your mission, capacity and community impact goals. Any organization or partner in your network can use this self-assessment tool to identify their readiness, strengthen capacity and plan next steps to collaborate and grow their role in workforce development.

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- A strong understanding of potential partners and collaborators → [Activity 5.1](#)

Suggested Time: 1–2 weeks

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Participants: Key staff working on workforce development

Instructions

- 1** Complete the **Workforce Operations Self-Assessment Worksheet** ([page 4](#)) to evaluate your organization’s readiness to add or expand urban forestry workforce programs. Use the worksheet to identify specific actions needed to strengthen your organization’s capacity across staffing, funding, partnerships and planning.
- 2** Invite workforce partners in your network to complete the assessment and share insights. Different partners can lend capacity and expertise that can make your programs stronger and more coordinated.

After you complete this activity:

- Use your findings to inform long-term workforce development planning with your Workforce Committee.
- With the Committee, identify common strengths and gaps across organizations and prioritize next steps for collaboration.

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Workforce Operations Self-Assessment

For each category in the worksheet below, thoughtfully assess your organization's readiness across staffing, funding, partnerships and planning. Then identify concrete actions you need to take to move from interest to impact.

Getting started

If you're not sure where to begin, reach out to your state's [Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator](#) for technical assistance and partner introductions. Many state coordinators maintain lists of local partners and can connect you with established workforce initiatives.



Note: Building relationships with reentry organizations can also expand your candidate pool and strengthen pathways for returning citizens to access stable, green career opportunities.

Tips for identifying strong actions:

- Consider what concrete actions will strengthen your readiness, such as staff training, new partnerships, funding applications or internal policy updates.
- Leverage partnerships: Consider which organizations, agencies, or community partners have expertise, capacity, or resources that could help you close gaps or share responsibilities.
- Prioritize actions that have the greatest impact on your ability to launch or sustain a workforce initiative, such as collaborating with local reentry programs to expand recruitment pipelines, developing inclusive hiring policies, or adding wraparound support for participants with barriers to employment.
- Note who within your organization (or which partner) will take the lead on each action and set a realistic timeline for progress.

Sample Worksheet

Organizational Mission Alignment

Does our mission align with environmental, community development or workforce goals that can support urban forestry?

Readiness Status:

Our mission supports community resilience and equity but does not yet explicitly include urban forestry or reentry workforce goals.

Actions Needed:

1. Draft a short mission alignment statement showing how urban forestry job training contributes to community resilience and workforce equity.
2. Present alignment opportunities to leadership and board for discussion and endorsement.
3. Integrate relevant language into the next strategic plan update or program descriptions.
4. Identify existing job training programs that could be expanded to include urban forestry and reentry components.
5. Partner with reentry or transitional job programs to recruit participants and provide case management, job placement or supportive services.
6. Identify an urban forestry or conservation organization to assist with trainee recruitment and delivering trainings.

Self-Assessment Worksheet

Reminder: Once you have completed the Self-Assessment Worksheet for your own initiative, invite partners in your network to do the same so that you can share insights and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Organizational Mission Alignment

Does our mission align with environmental, community development or workforce goals that can support urban forestry?



Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Partner Network

Do we have connections with local environmental organizations, city departments or training providers?

Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Training Capacity

Do we have staff or facilities to deliver training, or can we partner with existing training providers?



Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Urban Forestry Knowledge

Do staff or partners have baseline knowledge of arboriculture, green infrastructure or related fields?

Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Tree Equity Lens

Have we identified how our work can advance equity in access to tree cover and green jobs?



Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Funding Readiness

Do we have funding or can we access grants/contracts to support workforce training?

Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Wraparound Support

Do we have partnerships to provide services like childcare, transportation, or job placement assistance?



Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

Reentry Engagement

Do we have policies, partnerships or practices that support employment and training for justice-involved or reentry populations?

Readiness Status:

Actions Needed:

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