



Tree Equity Handbook

A Practical Guide to Closing the Canopy Gap Between Neighborhoods


ACTIVITY 5.4

→ Workforce Trainings

**Toolkit 5:
Develop a Workforce**

Issued November 2025



A man with a beard and a child are kneeling on the ground, planting a small tree. The man is wearing a light-colored shirt and green gloves, and the child is wearing a dark shirt. They are both looking down at the tree. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Activity 5.4: Workforce Trainings

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.

Activity Map

→ [Networking for Workforce Development](#)

→ [Workforce Review](#)

→ [Workforce Operations Action Planning](#)

Workforce Trainings

→ [Building the Future Through K-12 Engagement](#)

Workforce Trainings



Overview & Basic Steps

Training programs should connect participants directly to employment opportunities, build technical and transferable skills, and include the wraparound supports needed to ensure lasting success for all participants. This exercise will help you design engaging, accessible training experiences that prepare participants for real jobs in urban forestry and are inclusive of reentry populations and other communities historically underrepresented in the green workforce.

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- A strong understanding of potential partners and collaborators → [Activity 5.1](#)
- An inventory of existing training programs and needs from your Workforce Review Worksheet → [Activity 5.2](#)

Suggested Time: 1–2 weeks

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Participants: Key staff working on workforce development, with input from training partners, reentry programs and employers

Instructions

- 1 Review the guidance on best practices for designing an urban forestry workforce training.
- 2 Build out activity plans for future training sessions, including wraparound support services, using the **Training Activity Plan Worksheet** → [page 8](#)
- 3 Incorporate pathways that connect participants to recognized credentials, supportive employers and continuing education opportunities.

After you complete this activity:

- Use your findings to inform long-term workforce development planning with your Workforce Committee.

Workforce Training Basics

Common urban forestry training activities

- Tree planting
- Tree maintenance, pruning and care for long-term canopy health
- Tree risk assessment for removal — basic safety standards
- Soil health and site preparation
- Equipment use and safety
- Urban wood utilization
- Tree inventory and assessment
- Data collection and reporting
- Pest and disease management
- Urban nursery propagation
- Work readiness and reentry skill-building

Sustainability and equity competencies

- Stormwater management and green infrastructure
- Climate-adaptive species selection
- Cultural competency in community forestry
- Environmental justice and Tree Equity awareness
- Community outreach
- Reentry inclusion and equity awareness

Training techniques

- Workshops
- Classroom or hybrid courses
- Field sessions
- Certification prep courses
- Microcredential programs
- Bridge or transition programs

Experiential and peer-based learning

- Job shadowing
- Mentorship
- Internships
- Apprenticeships and on-the-job training
- Service-learning projects
- Crew-based models
- Reentry fellowship or transitional employment models

Supportive and wraparound techniques

- Career coaching
- Coalition management
- Team leadership
- Job readiness workshops
- Soft skills training
- Peer mentorship and reentry navigation support
- Case management partnerships
- Restorative coaching



Best Practices for Designing Training Activities

Start with community and industry input.

- Conduct listening sessions with local employers, trainees, reentry partners and community organizations to identify real workforce needs and barriers.
- Align training outcomes with local job demand, such as tree planting, maintenance, monitoring, nursery work or green infrastructure installation.
- Identify recognized credentials (e.g., ISA Certified Arborist, OSHA, CPR, chainsaw safety) that can be aligned with trainings.
- Engage reentry professionals early to design accessible and trauma-informed training programs.

Design activities from foundational curricula or training models.

Tap into trainings from existing resources or training models. Consider adapting free resources to suit your community’s specific environment and workforce needs — just make sure your training remains accessible and culturally relevant. **For reentry audiences:** Pair technical lessons with soft skills, financial literacy and mentorship to support reentry success.

Resource/Training Model	Organization	Description
Tree Equity Pre-Employment Curriculum	American Forests	Free curriculum designed to introduce participants to arboriculture, green infrastructure and urban forestry concepts
Introduction to Arboriculture Safety Certificate	TCIA	Free online course covering entry-level arboriculture safety basics
Nature in the City: Turning Knowledge Into Urban Forestry Practice	UForest	Free online training for mid-level learners to explore interdisciplinary urban forestry design, planning and governance
Introduction to Arboriculture Training	ISA Online Learning	Online learning center offering diverse educational opportunities that range from entry to advance for arborists and urban foresters
Industry Academies, Foundations, TRUST, Reforestation Hub	PowerCorpsPHL and PowerCorps Boston	Leading training programs that offer paid entry-level and youth career training in tree planting, park maintenance and environmental stewardship.
Urban and Community Forester and Forestry Technician certificates	Society of American Foresters	Professional and advanced credentialing

Include nontraditional learning.

Urban forestry is hands-on by nature. Complement classroom lessons with experiential opportunities such as:

- **Field activities:** Tree planting, pruning, nursery work, crew safety, maintenance projects
- **Site visits:** Local parks, green spaces, tree nurseries, public works yards
- **Mentorship:** Pairing trainees with professionals who reflect their lived experiences
- **Peer-to-peer training:** Creating space for mutual support
- **Transferable skills:** Teamwork, communication, project management
- **Flexible formats:** Offering virtual or hybrid options to accommodate diverse needs

Incorporate storytelling and role models.

Storytelling helps trainees see themselves in the work. Bring the field to life by connecting participants with real people who have built careers in urban forestry, such as city foresters, crew leaders or community organizers. Invite them to share personal stories of growth, challenges and purpose.

- Use video clips, site visits or live Q&A sessions to highlight how urban forestry work makes a tangible impact in neighborhoods.
- Feature guest speakers or mentors from the urban forestry field who reflect the communities you're serving.
- Highlight career journeys to make the field relatable.
- Include returning citizens or reentry alumni who have successfully transitioned into green careers. These stories build hope and reduce stigma.

Provide proof of completion.

- **Industry-recognized credentials** (e.g., ISA Tree Worker, OSHA 10/30 safety training, Chainsaw Safety) carry the most weight with employers.
 - > **Program-specific certificates** (e.g., certificate of completion, microcredentials, reentry-focused milestone certificates) provide formal recognition of completion by the training organization or partner institutions.

Establish a clear Training Activity Plan ([page 8](#)).

1. Identify a training activity (e.g., an informational session, nursery visit, crew safety demonstration or tree planting event).
2. Reach out to one training provider and one employer to discuss partnership opportunities. Consider including a reentry partner, such as a transitional job or pre-apprenticeship program.
3. Assign a lead staff member or partner to coordinate urban forestry efforts and serve as the main point of contact.
4. Find potential partners and supporters in your **Workforce Partners List** ([Activity 5.1](#)).

Plan wraparound support.

Identify local partners who can provide support services to help trainees succeed. Solid support services help ensure that every trainee can participate fully and persist through training to employment.

Recruit participants intentionally.

Recruit from underrepresented communities through trusted community connections like community colleges, community centers, faith-based groups and local nonprofits or social service providers. Include reentry pathways by partnering with reentry organizations, parole/probation offices and transitional housing programs to identify candidates seeking career reentry opportunities. Provide clear information on eligibility, expectations and support available. Encourage people with transferable experience (e.g., landscaping, construction, maintenance, community service) to participate.

TOOLKIT 5: Develop a Workforce | Activity 4 – WORKSHEET

Training Activity Plan

The Training Activity Plan Worksheet is designed to help you plan, organize and track workforce training or engagement activities in a structured and equitable way. Follow the steps below to complete each section.

- 1. Activity:** Briefly describe the activity you are planning (e.g., tree planting workshop, youth engagement recruitment, reentry upskilling session).
- 2. Timeline:** Enter the projected start and end date.
- 3. Responsible Party:** Identify the lead person, department or organization coordinating the activity.
- 4. Supporting Partners:** List any partners providing funding, training, logistics or technical support.
- 5. Activity Details:** Describe what the activity includes (e.g., classroom training, fieldwork, guest speakers).
- 6. Status:** Note whether the activity is in planning, active or complete stages.
- 7. Target Participants:** Identify whom the activity is serving (e.g., youth, reentry, adult trainees, or community partners).
- 8. Resources Needed:** List specific needs such as funding, staff, supplies or community partnerships.
- 9. Expected Outcomes:** Outline measurable results that demonstrate impact (e.g., number of participants trained, partnerships established, credentials earned).
- 10. Wraparound Services:** Identify any additional supports participants may need. Include services specific to reentry participants such as legal aid, transportation or transitional housing support.
- 11. Local Partners:** Note which local partners can help provide needed wraparound services, including those specializing in reentry, job coaching or case management.

Training Activity Plan Worksheet

Complete one worksheet per training activity.



Activity		Timeline
Responsible Party	Supporting Partner(s)	
Activity Details		
Status		
Target Participants		
Resources Needed		
Expected Outcomes		
Wraparound Service	Local Partner(s)	
Childcare		
Transportation vouchers or passes		
Emergency financial assistance		
Career counseling and job placement support		



Activity 5.4: Workforce Trainings

Toolkit 5: Develop a Workforce

Written by:

Tia Washington
Yelitza Garcia
Julia Twichell

Reviewed by:

Vikram Krishnamurthy
Ian Leahy

Suggested citation:

American Forests. "Activity 5.4: Workforce Trainings."
Tree Equity Handbook Toolkit 5: Develop a Workforce.
Version 1. 2024. Washington, DC: American Forests.
<https://treeequityhandbook.org/tree-equity-handbook/develop-a-workforce/#activity-workforce-training>



©2025 American Forests
americanforests.org