

Concept Paper: The Oakland Green Jobs Corps

Contact Emily Kirsch

- Oakland Apollo Alliance Coordinator
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
- emily@ellabakercenter.org
- 510.285.8228



OAKLAND APOLLO ALLIANCE

I. Introduction

The Oakland Green Jobs Corps will provide world-class job training to prepare young adults in Oakland for green-collar careers. The program will have a special focus on providing "green pathways out of poverty" by recruiting and training people with barriers to employment (e.g., lack of job skills, lack of education, language/cultural barriers, or history in juvenile/criminal justice system).

The Oakland Green Jobs Corps will address two critical crises (of the environment and of poverty) with one solution. The global warming climate crisis is showing everyone that we must make our society more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable. We must retrofit our buildings, remake our transportation systems, retool our manufacturing processes, and rethink our patterns of consumption. Oakland can engage and employ our young adults to do the work of this colossal project, providing a shining national example of using the rising green wave to "lift all boats."

The Oakland Green Jobs Corps will launch in Fall 2008 with \$250,000 in seed funding from the City of Oakland. The City will award this funding competitively to the agency or partnership in Oakland most qualified to run the program. (Please note that the Ella Baker Center will not operate the program and did not compete for the funds.)

The Oakland Green Jobs Corps concept has the support of Mayor Ron Dellums, the Oakland City Council, and key city staff in the Public Works Agency and the Community and Economic Development Agency. It is endorsed by the Alameda County Central Labor Council, Youth Uprising, the Sierra Club, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and dozens of other leading groups and agencies.

The Oakland Green Jobs Corps is a project of the Oakland Apollo Alliance, a coalition of environmentalists, labor unions, community groups, and green businesses. The Oakland Apollo Alliance is convened by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the Electrical Workers Union IBEW 595 (see below for more information about the Apollo Alliance).

II. Goals of the Oakland Green Jobs Corps Program

- **HELP YOUNG ADULTS:** Prepare (and inspire) young adults in Oakland to have green-collar careers, providing pathways out of poverty for people with barriers to employment.
- **RESTORE THE ENVIRONMENT:** Supply the trained workforce that can make Oakland less polluting, more energy efficient, and more environmentally sustainable.
- **SUPPORT GREEN BUSINESS:** Support the growth of green businesses in Oakland, with a focus on those businesses that provide high-quality green-collar jobs.
- **ADVANCE OAKLAND'S GREEN ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP:** Promote Oakland's position as a leading city in green economic development.

III. What's Unique About The Oakland Green Jobs Corps Concept

Research shows that green businesses in the Bay Area provide high-quality jobs with good pay, good benefits, and good working conditions.¹ These firms have many dignified manual labor jobs that are ideally suited for entry-level job-seekers. However, there is very little infrastructure for job training to support these businesses as they grow. Like cities across the nation, Oakland faces a shortage of programs providing "green-collar" workforce development. This shortage will worsen as the green economy grows.

Oakland and the Bay Area already have excellent job training programs, but most are not currently linked to green employers. These programs need the right incentives and infrastructure in order to retool for green-collar job training.

Using the "Pinderhughes Model" for green workforce development, the Oakland Green Jobs Corps will create partnerships between job training programs and green employers. It will also provide key links to educational institutions, labor unions, and community-based organizations.

IV. The Oakland Apollo Alliance's Role

The Oakland Apollo Alliance has been the chief champion and advocate for the Oakland Green Jobs Corps program. To support the creation of the program, the Oakland Apollo Alliance has done three things:

1. **PROPOSED THE TRAINING MODEL:** The Oakland Apollo Alliance developed a framework and curriculum for training and internships, drawing on best practices in the Bay Area and nationwide.
2. **CONVENED A "GREEN EMPLOYER COUNCIL":** This council of employers will consolidate the pool of jobs and simplify placement of Green Jobs Corps graduates. (more on page 3)
3. **SECURED SEED FUNDING:** The Oakland Apollo Alliance secured \$250,000 in seed funding from Oakland City Council to help launch the program.

As the program launches, the Oakland Apollo Alliance will also provide outreach to the Oakland community. The Alliance embodies a strong local network of community-based organizations, labor unions, educational institutions, and local leaders who can do the outreach and recruitment to attract young adults to apply to the Oakland Green Jobs Corps program. This network includes the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Alameda County Central Labor Council, Youth Uprising, the Electrical Workers Union (IBEW 595), Peralta Community College District, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, Urban Habitat, TradesWomen Inc., Urban ReLeaf, and many other leading community-based and labor-union-based groups in Oakland.

¹ In November 2007, Professor Raquel Rivera Pinderhughes (San Francisco State University) released a research report on green jobs in the Bay Area. Her research results show high average wages, good benefits packages, low turnover, and good working conditions in green-collar employers in the Bay Area. To read the report, go online to <http://bss.sfsu.edu/raquelrp>

V. Creating the Oakland Green Employer Council

The Oakland Apollo Alliance has conducted an inventory of green businesses in Oakland to create a categorized database of employers. Using this list, the Oakland Apollo Alliance convenes a Green Employer Council that will advise the training curriculum and provide the internship placements for Oakland Green Jobs Corps trainees (as well as for other new green job training programs in the region).

The Oakland Apollo Alliance has partnered with Mayor Ron Dellums and the Chamber of Commerce's Green Technology Economic Cluster to invite these businesses to join the Green Employer Council. Each firm agrees to provide on the job training for Oakland Green Jobs Corps trainees. Research by Professor Pinderhughes shows that most green employers in the East Bay are small or medium-sized firms. Most of these firms will be able to employ one to three trainees at a time.

VI. The Oakland Green Jobs Corps Training Model

In consultation with local, regional, and national experts, the Oakland Apollo Alliance proposed the following components for the model:²

A. Recruitment And Outreach (40 young adults age 18-35)

Using connections to community-based programs, labor unions, and educational institutions, the Oakland Apollo Alliance will recruit young adults (age 18-35) with barriers to employment, with the goal of having 40 people accepted into the program.

B. Phase I: Three-Month Training

Those people go through a three-month training that provides wraparound services (life skills training, supportive services such as child care, etc). This phase will involve both hands-on training and classroom training. There will be a specific classroom module that covers "environmental global awareness" so that trainees understand the global climate crisis and see their work as part of a larger effort to save the planet. Participants spend half of each week in hard skills vocational training, and are paid a wage during these hours.

The training phase includes the following key components:

- **Basic Literacy** (math and English)
- **Life Skills and Job Readiness Skills Training**
- **Environmental Sustainability and Environmental Justice** (for credit within the Peralta Community Colleges)
- **Financial Management** (how to manage money and personal finances)
- **OSHA Safety Training Certification**
- **Labor Unions 101** (how to get into union apprenticeship programs)
- **Other specialized support services** (assistance with child care, transportation challenges, nutrition, drug/alcohol problems, issues with drivers licenses, etc.)
- **Vocational Hard Skills with Paid Stipends** (Trainees will go through three 4-week rotations learning vocational hard skills related to green-collar work. Trainees will earn \$9 per hour, 20 hours per week)

² Many components of this model are based on the research and recommendations of Professor Raquel Rivera Pinderhughes (San Francisco State University). Professor Pinderhughes has performed essential research of green businesses in the East Bay, and has also investigated best practices among workforce development agencies.

C. Phase II: Six-Month Paid Internships

Trainees will be placed in six-month paid internships with employers from the Oakland Green Business Council. Trainees will be paid a **living wage** during the internships. **Case management and specialized support services** will be provided to ensure success for both trainees and employers during this phase.

D. Graduation

After completing the internships, Oakland Apollo Alliance and other involved partners will host a high-profile graduation to honor the trainees and generate further support for the program.

E. Career Options

After completing the internships, the Oakland Green Jobs Corps will assist graduates with finding real opportunities in quality jobs with employers with whom we have partnered, union apprenticeship programs, and/or higher education. For at least one year after graduation, the Oakland Green Jobs Corps will continue to provide case management and job retention services.

VII. Seed Funding from City of Oakland

After the infamous California energy crisis of 2000/2001, the state of California sued several energy companies for their role in the crisis. The energy companies settled, resulting in payouts to cities across the state, including several million dollars for the City of Oakland. This money must be spent on energy efficiency projects. The proposed budget for this money was developed by the Public Works Agency and approved by City Council in June 2007. While the proposed budget included \$100,000 in seed funding for the Oakland Green Jobs Corps, the Oakland Apollo Alliance successfully advocated to City Councilmembers to increase this amount to \$250,000.

The City of Oakland will award the \$250,000 competitively using a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The RFP requirements are based on the "Pinderhughes model" of green workforce development, as proposed by the Oakland Apollo Alliance. The City is expected to award the funds in Summer 2008 to the workforce training agency that demonstrates it is most qualified to operate the program.

The Oakland Green Jobs Corps is expected to launch in Fall 2008.

XII. About the Oakland Apollo Alliance

The Oakland Apollo Alliance is a coalition of labor unions, environmentalists, community-based organizations and green businesses, working together to create quality jobs in the new energy economy. The Oakland Apollo Alliance is anchored by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW Local 595).



The Oakland Apollo Alliance believes that Oakland can become a shining national example of a blue-collar town transformed into a green-collar powerhouse. Oakland can be a model sustainable city that creates high quality jobs for its residents while cleaning up the environment, improving public health and helping America achieve energy independence.