

Growing Capacity for the Green Economy: Effective job preparation for vulnerable populations to enter the Green workforce



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Project Overview: Growing Capacity for the Green Economy is a job-preparation project designed to provide Milwaukee's African-American adults, (18+) with skills, training, and hands-on work experiences in the fields of intensive sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, environmental education, and community food systems development to prepare them for immediate work in the Green Industry. Growing Capacity for the Green Economy project will provide participants with:

1. Education and training in advanced methods of intensive agriculture;
2. Research and development of new methods and technologies in the greening field;
3. 20 FTE positions at the onset of the project and 150 FTE positions upon project completion, with a focus on food production; and,
4. The promotion and creation of community food security in Milwaukee

Need for Green Job Creation in Milwaukee:

High prevalence of nutrition-related disease: Because of poverty, the burdens of food insecurity, and poor health status, health disparities are greater in Milwaukee than the rest of the state. In fact, a June, 2010 report from Trust for America's Health, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that Wisconsin now has the highest obesity rate in the nation for African-Americans, at a whopping 44%, with African-American women at 48.8%. It has become common knowledge that obesity is a nutrition-related disease often linked to inadequate access to healthy food. With regards to youth, the 2003 Milwaukee County Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition's study found that 27,400 of our community's youth are overweight and 37,850 youth are at risk for becoming overweight. Most of these youth attend a Milwaukee Public School which current data shows 81% of students are low-income and eligible for free or reduced lunch (MPS at a Glance).

High Unemployment Neighborhood: UW-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development found that for certain depressed pockets of the target area, unemployment rates for African-American males ages 25-54 spiked as high as 54.9 percent, nearly 10 times the U.S. rate ("Stealth Depression: Joblessness in the City of Milwaukee since 1990, UWM CED, August 25, 2003, p. 19).

Milwaukee residents lack access to emerging green careers. Wisconsin has a large agricultural sector and emerging green markets stem from organics and locally distributed food. According to the Wisconsin Local Food Marketing Guide 2009 developed by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, "The timing has never been better to enter the local food production systems in Wisconsin. Increased consumer demand, interest in preparing healthy meals, information availability, and expertise willingly shared with new producers has changed the dynamics so that small-and large-scale farmers, alike, can thrive in the marketplace...Local food initiatives are gaining momentum in Wisconsin and creating new business opportunities for state farmers." While the demand for locally produced food is increasing, individuals within the target area do not have access to careers that would enable them to be a part of this rapidly emerging sector in the current economic climate.

Timeline: 12 Months to Train

"Growing Capacity for the Green Economy" project will create 20 FTE positions at the onset of the project and 150 FTE positions by the end of the 12-month project to construct 150 hoop-houses throughout the City of Milwaukee on identified vacant or blighted city-owned property. The first 20 FTEs will begin employment within the first two months of the project period, five of which will be trained for supervision duties of the remaining and additional 145 FTEs. Hoop-house construction will

begin during these first two initial months along with recruitment, interviewing, and hiring of the additional 130 FTEs which will occur beginning month 3 until the end of the project period. Included with the hoop-house construction is the citywide composting and food waste collection for the production of fertile compost and soil to grow food in each of the 150 hoop-houses year-round, which are estimated to feed 3,000 families (1 hoop-house can feed 20 families). Starting in month 2, production beds (raised garden beds) will be installed in each of the 150 hoop-houses and will produce local, healthy, sustainable, and affordable food for Milwaukee families to access year-round.

The implementation of this project will not only benefit the 150 FTEs and 3,000 families with increased food security and livable wages, but the neighborhoods receiving these hoop-houses and increased economic activity will surely experience beautification, urban renewal, and an overall improvement of the way these urban neighborhoods are perceived.

Matching Funds: Growing Power is committed to providing 100% of the \$425K grant in matching funds.

Project Outcomes:

Through the Growing Capacity for the Green Economy project, Growing Power will impact the African-American population in four outcomes.

Outcome 1: Create 150 FTEs for African-American males to work in the emerging field of urban sustainable agriculture.

Outcome 2: Provide effective job preparation training in the fields of intensive sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, environmental education, and community food systems development. As the Green Economy grows so will the capacity of low-income, communities of color to participate in this economy and address food and environmental injustices, i.e., lead poisoning, food redlining. African-American children and families will transform their communities into healthy environments, providing safe and environmentally sound places for children to prosper and thrive.

Outcome 3: Improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families by inspiring and motivating parents and young adults with the preparation to immediately enter the Green workforce. African-American children and their families will experience improved quality of life as a result of acquiring dignified employment with livable wages.

Outcome 4: Increase the ability of African-American populations to proactively engage with the multitude of stakeholders comprising their local food system to improve their ability to regularly access healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food. African-American children and families will live healthier lives with increased access to healthy, affordable, and safe food. In addition, African-American men will contribute to providing increased access to healthy, safe, and affordable food to other children and families in their communities.

Looking to the Future: Growing Power is well positioned to execute the Growing Capacity for the Green Economy project considering its extensive experience in creating quality, well-paying jobs for Milwaukeeans. Furthermore, the organization is developing a swift and capacity-building transition plan in preparation of the construction of its multi-use five story vertical farm building scheduled for completion this 2012. Growing Power expects to hire additional Administrative staff, i.e., Human Resources and Social Workers, to assist the organization in meeting the needs of its growing employee base.