

# Greening U.S. Adult Basic Skills Efforts

## What Eco-Partners and Adult Educators Can Do Together



A Can-Do Guide of the Open Door Collective  
September 30, 2019 Edition

### What's Inside

This ODC “Can-Do Guide” presents why and how adult basic skills programs can collaborate with what we are calling “eco-partners” -- organizations that in various ways support environmental sustainability.

It describes eight types of collaborations, with examples of each and links to corresponding organizations and documents:

1. Green education for environmental sustainability;
2. Green job training;
3. Green services for adult learners to help them access weatherization and other energy-saving tools, public transportation, healthy foods, a cleaner physical environment, and other environment-friendly resources);
4. Basic skills supports for eco-partners to help them better work with clients and employees with basic skills limitations;

5. Green facilities to help adult education facilities to use eco-friendly practices);
6. Green service learning to engage adult learners in improving environmental conditions in their communities;
7. Green advocacy and planning to generate awareness and support for both environmental sustainability and adult basic education;
8. Green partnerships research to document and guide environmental/adult education collaborations;
9. Joint professional development for staff of environmental and adult basic skills organizations (to build trust, expertise, and collaborative relationships).

At the end, the guide suggests how adult education and eco-partners can get started on creating productive collaborations. Two Appendices provide links to programs, documents, and photos shown in the Guide.

Welcome!

### The Open Door Collective

*ODC is a national network of adult educators and others who promote high-quality adult basic education as a tool for poverty reduction and forward-thinking social and economic development. (Visit [www.opendoorcollective.org](http://www.opendoorcollective.org) .)*

# Part 1: Purpose & Audiences

## Purpose

This “Can-Do Guide” aims at building collaboration between “eco-partners” and adult basic skills programs. These “green” collaborations can benefit several stakeholder groups in various ways and take a number of forms. *Such joint efforts are vital if our nation – and our world – are to leave a livable planet for the next generation.* These potential stakeholders, benefits, and forms of collaboration are detailed below.

## Audiences

This guide is written for two primary audiences: “eco-partners” and adult basic skills programs.

“Eco-partners” are defined broadly as organizations and individuals that have as a primary or secondary goal the protection and improvement of our natural environment. These could include public- or private-sector organizations that:

- set, support, monitor, and implement environmental-protection policies and regulations;
- create and distribute environmentally-friendly products;
- provide environmental education, employment, and improvement services;
- in other ways serve to protect and improve our natural environment (e.g., by reducing carbon emissions and greenhouse gases;

promoting renewable energy resources; cleaning air, water, and soil; reducing waste of resources; using eco-friendly food-production practices; and increasing community access to the natural environment).

Eco-partners could include environmental advocacy groups, community cleanup efforts, green-job training programs (e.g., solar installation, weatherization, uses of energy-saving technologies) and employers seeking environmentally-trained employees, companies that produce and sell green products (e.g., organic foods, cleaning products, solar equipment), environmental education centers, labor unions promoting environmentally-sustainable workplaces, community recycling centers, funders of environmental-sustainability initiatives, etc.

The term “eco-partners” should be viewed in a flexible way. They might be organizations that include environmental sustainability as part of a larger mission. For example, a primary school might include environmental education in its curriculum or a youth group might volunteer to do environmental cleanup activities as part of its community service program.

Adult basic skills programs are local, state, and national organizations whose primary purpose is the strengthening of the basic skills (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy, problem solving, digital literacy) and other fundamental skills that adults and out-of-school youth need for work, family, and civic

roles. Basic skills providers include public- or private-sector agencies based in a variety of settings (e.g., community-based organizations, public schools, community colleges, libraries, workplaces, labor unions, correctional facilities).

They serve diverse populations challenged by basic skills limitations. These can include employed workers and unemployed job seekers, older career-changers, parents who want to support their children’s learning and development, out-of-school youth and adults, people with disabilities, and current and former inmates. Immigrants and refugees (who can have various levels of English fluency and basic skills in their native languages) are a major segment of the adult basic skills student population.

This document is aimed at organizational leaders and others; in particular, we hope to reach environmental educators, as they – as educators -- have a natural connection to adult basic skills programs.

## Information Sources

This document draws on:

- a literature review of sources from the environmental, workforce development, and adult education fields;
- input from adult educators and environmental stakeholders.

## Part 2: Why collaborate?

### How collaborations can benefit multiple stakeholders

The Open Door Collective is a national network of adult educators and other stakeholders whose mission is to help adult basic skills education programs to work with other stakeholder groups to reduce poverty and income inequality in the United States. We especially hope to support the estimated 36 million adults who are challenged by basic skills limitations. In keeping with that goal, this guide promotes collaborations that:

Reduce poverty and income inequality for adults with limited basic skills by helping them to:

- become better-informed consumers so they can use natural resources in environmentally-sustainable ways in their homes, at work, and in their use of transportation. Adult education programs can help learners and their families manage their personal financial and in-kind resources more efficiently.
- develop expertise and connections that they can use to succeed in family-sustaining green jobs (e.g., energy conservation and production, environmental cleanup, waste reduction, production of environmentally-sustainable food sources). (See a link to a January 8, 2019 New York *Times* article by Thomas Friedman on page 19.)

Benefit other stakeholders by:

- improving communities (e.g., environmental sustainability, public health, economic development climate, community spirit) where adult learners live and work and where education programs operate;
- strengthening adult basic education programs by improving their use of natural resources, making program services more relevant and attractive to students, increasing program access to a wider range of resources and partnerships; and improving the public image of adult basic skills



programs as supporters of environmental sustainability;

- strengthening environmental improvement efforts by improving their access to adult learners, their communities, and education and other programs that serve them.

### Environmental challenges and opportunities

Environmental challenges disproportionately impact people with low basic skills. Impacts can include reduced health, employment options, and ability to make informed decisions as consumers and citizens – for those individuals and their families.

Adults with limited basic skills often have limited economic opportunities and resources. The communities in which lower-income people reside are more often the sites of polluting industries: power plants, trucking and distribution hubs, energy extraction businesses, hazardous waste sites, etc. This group is thus often more severely impacted by contamination of air, soil, water, and food sources. They are more likely to feel the effects of rising costs of energy, food, and other resources that result from drought, floods, and

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## Why collaborate?

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other weather conditions. Lower-income families typically have fewer connections to the networks of influence that could alleviate pollution and fewer resources to change their circumstances (by moving, for example) or to afford technologies or training that could help them deal with those hazards.

A recent growth in new kinds of technologies, energy sources, jobs, and work and consumer strategies can counter the above negative environmental trends, and people in the U.S. now have the opportunity to adopt environmentally-sustainable ways of living, working, and interacting with the environment. However, doing so can be more difficult for those with limited basic skills and economic resources.

Though these adults often possess significant strengths – practical skills, family and community support networks, collaboration skills, and positive motivation, basic skills limitations can make it

difficult to access and use environment-sustaining practices and resources in their workplaces, homes, and communities.

For example, people who live in areas with high levels of truck traffic know that their children are affected with asthma and other respiratory ailments. Similarly, residents in areas with soil pollution know that they cannot grow food without decontaminating that soil. Obtaining understandable information on what to do in these cases (and in the other pressing environmental circumstances low-income individuals and families find themselves in) can be more difficult for those with lower levels of basic skills. Not only might their lack of basic skills make it difficult to understand environmental information in written or oral forms, their basic skills limitations might have blocked their ability to develop environmental knowledge in secondary school and post-secondary education or via newspapers, television, or the Internet.

It can also be difficult for them to take advantage of new “green” education, job training, and work opportunities because occupational training programs do not always adequately accommodate learners who have lower levels of basic skills. They are thus blocked from learning how to use more environment-sustaining practices in their current jobs and/or to move into new jobs that are supportive of environmental sustainability.

To reduce and possibly eliminate these negative impacts, we propose new partnerships between the eco-friendly stakeholders described above (who have expertise, resources, networks, and other environmental sustainability assets), adult basic skills programs, and the adults and communities those education programs serve.





## Part 3: How Eco-Partners and Adult Basic Skills Programs Can Collaborate

Until now, there has not been a major push to link environmental education and other environmental sustainability efforts with adult basic skills initiatives.

This is in contrast to earlier governmental and private initiatives to involve employers, labor unions, healthcare providers, family services, criminal justice practitioners, and other stakeholders in special initiatives for lower-skilled adults.

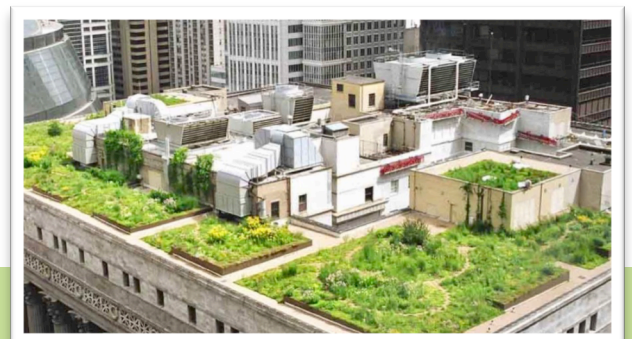
These collaborations have resulted in workplace literacy, career pathway, immigrant integration, health literacy, family literacy, financial literacy, and prisoner community re-entry programs that incorporate basic skills development as a key component.

There are, nonetheless, some promising examples of environmental educators working with adult educators to help lower-skilled adults deal with environmental issues in their communities, workplaces, and homes. There are also good examples of projects that help adult learners to prepare for and move into “green jobs.”

Examples of these and other collaborations between eco-friendly stakeholders and adult educators are highlighted in the following pages.\*

“I’m often asked whether I believe in global warming. I now just reply with the question: Do you believe in gravity?”

*Neil deGrasse Tyson*



\* Most of the examples presented in this guide are linked to an on-line source for more information. These links are shown on page 19. If a link doesn't work, please copy and paste the URL into your web browser.

# Eight Types of Collaborations

We have identified the following eight possible types of collaborations between eco-partners and adult basic skills programs. We invite readers to alert us to additional examples to include in future editions.

## **Type #1: Green education for environmental sustainability to help learners to understand and respond effectively to environmental problems in their homes, communities, and workplaces**

Environmental educators can help adult educators integrate green themes, problems, and information into basic skills program curricula. Learners can not only adopt eco-friendly practices into their lives but get involved in advocacy and other environmental justice actions that tackle the causes of environmental destruction. Here are some examples:

***The Chelsea (Mass.) Intergenerational Literacy Program*** actively supports the health of its immigrant clients, their families, and the larger community and is a member of ***the Healthy Chelsea Coalition***. Activities focus on environmental health (to counter asthma and cancer) and nutrition (e.g., green space and community gardens).

***Science Take-Out*** (a small, woman-owned business in Rochester, NY) has developed environmental education resources to help people learn about local environmental challenges (e.g., lead poisoning in children) and then plan and implement appropriate responses).

***Groundwork USA*** is a “national network of local organizations devoted to transforming the natural and built environment of low-resource communities . . . working at the intersection of the environment, equity, and civic engagement.” The national organization and its local affiliates focus on “equity and inclusion,” “healthy communities,” “transforming brownfields,” “urban waters,” and “youth development.”

***YouTube*** has many free videos on green themes that adult educators and learners can use. Examples: “What Are Green Jobs?,” “One Drop of Water: Why We Need Green Infrastructure,” “What’s Inside a Wind Turbine,” and “Why We Should Be Urban Farming.”

***The Iowa AmeriCorps 4H Environmental Education Program*** . . . is a partnership (of AmeriCorps, 4-H, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Volunteers help young Iowans understand and respond to water quality and quantity and other environmental challenges, while reinforcing mental and physical wellness through engagement with the outdoors.

***ProLiteracy’s “News for You”*** newspaper provides clear-language articles on the environment and many other issues for adults who have basic skills limitations. Sample headlines have included “Ice Melts in Greenland,” “As Planet Changes, Humans Argue and Try to Adjust,” “Couple Collects Cans to Pay for Wedding.”

***The Queens Public Library System in New York City*** operates both a large ESOL program and a “Greening Western Queens” service that provides information to residents in multiple languages about how they can “go green” in their lives and connect with environmental organizations.

*“Environmental education is a broad umbrella . . . creating a more sustainable future using the power of education . . . It focuses on using best practices in education to help create societal change to address social and environmental issues. Environmental educators work in all segments of society . . . students, teachers, administrators, and school boards . . . focusing on curriculum, professional development, schoolyards, and school buildings. They work with businesses to educate managers, employees, and vendors. . . . They facilitate citizen science programs to help people understand the scientific process and use the data to help protect species, habitat, communities, and ecological processes. They are professors in universities who train the next generation of teachers, environmental professionals, business leaders . . . They (help) journalists to (explain) the value of environmental education and decision makers to advocate for environmental education. They work . . . with conservation professionals to engage communities in finding solutions to conservation issues . . . And they work with health professionals who educate doctors, nurses, and other health professionals about the critical link between health and environment . . . They are naturalists helping to connect more people to nature and build stewardship values that last a lifetime.”*

*--- North American Association for Environmental Education*

## **Type #2: Green job training to help learners prepare for environmentally-sustaining employment in a range of industries**

“Green jobs” can include “new” jobs in emerging technologies like solar technology as well as more environmentally-sensitive versions of familiar jobs (e.g., in construction, agriculture, waste management, building maintenance, healthcare, and transportation). Training for such jobs can be carried out in occupational training and adult basic skills programs and in workplaces and labor unions. Participants can take this training prior to and/or after they are hired. The content can be broad (e.g., introductory training about a range of jobs, to help individuals understand jobs they might pursue and terminology, concepts, tools, and practices transferable across a number of jobs) and/or more specific (e.g., procedures, terminology, scientific knowledge, regulations) to particular jobs.

In green job training, basic skills education (e.g., in technical reading, oral communications, or applied math for particular jobs and ongoing education) can be integrated with the teaching of technical knowledge and skills.

See these examples of diverse learners, skills, jobs, locations, industries, and funders:

*Philadelphia’s Green Job Readiness Partnership draws on input from employers to develop a curriculum integrating basic literacy and numeracy with technical skills training for jobs related to energy efficiency of buildings and general construction. Participants learn through hands-on (e.g., field trips, work labs) and classroom activities. Work-readiness, energy-related science, study and test-taking, and tool-handling skills are also woven in.*

*Johnson County (Kansas) Community College has trained students in its hospitality industry program how to save energy and water and reduce waste and pollution in hotels and restaurants. By adopting such environmental sustainability practices, companies not only protect the environment but reduce costs.*

*The Green Jobs Training Program (operated by Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice with support from the Detroit Regional Workforce Fund) trains adults with limited employment histories to work in hazardous waste removal. Starting with an orientation to green jobs, participants then develop more specific skills in assessment of environmental hazards, hazardous waste removal, and lead, mold, and asbestos abatement. Learners simultaneously develop environmental, academic, work readiness, leadership, financial literacy, and computer skills.*



## **Type #2: Green job training (cont'd.)**

***PeoriaCorps** helps Peoria, Illinois youth obtain an industry-recognized credential through the National Green Infrastructure Certificate Program. In the process, participants develop leadership skills and self-efficacy and design a six-month action plan.*

***Green Jobs Academy** is a weatherization and energy efficiency training initiative run by the South Middlesex (Massachusetts) Opportunity Council. The Academy (1) provides entry-level skills training to help individuals move into in-demand, living-wage jobs with a career path and (2) provides flexible, customized, continuing education for weatherization and energy efficiency workers to help them advance. SMOC's industry-recognized certificates make it an attractive program for job seekers and industry workers.*

***Union County (New Jersey) College** has offered career preparation programs for several industries that integrate the learning of basic skills (as described by **Equipped for the Future**) with technical skills. Several curricula explored environmental issues faced by particular workers, using on-line sources and problem-solving activities. For example, the "TLD Ready: Basic Skills for High-Quality Service in the Transportation/Logistics/Distribution Industry" course included "Researching How to Save Energy in TLD."*

***The New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH)** provides occupational health training to 15,000 to 20,000 workers in the New York City each year. Through participatory activities, workers of all ages, literacy levels, and industries learn to identify hazards, develop solutions, and organize to change their conditions. Topics include chemical hazards and other environmental issues.*

***The Kupu Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps Community Program** helps under-resourced O'ahu youth develop life skills, job skills, and cultural and environmental knowledge through work experience and community service. Hands-on activities include planting of native species and learning how to maintain traditional farms and fishponds. Participants can also earn a high school equivalency certificate through the McKinley Community School for Adults. While not all members go on to working in conservation, for many this collaborative experience interacting with the land helps them connect with their community, culture, and nature and grow in profound ways.*





## **Type #2: Green job training (cont'd.)**

*Transport Workers Union Local 100 operates a Training and Upgrading Fund (TUF) education program for the 30,000-plus unionized workers in the New York City subway and bus system. This joint effort of TWU and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has – since the early 2000s -- supported the growth of mass transit as a strategy for the city’s economic development and environmental sustainability. Many of the training programs (e.g., civil service test preparation and contextualized math programs to help workers move into college-level electronics training) are designed to help workers develop particular basic skills (e.g., technical reading, writing, and math; test-taking and study skills) that workers need to move into better jobs and advance in their education. All transit jobs are “green jobs” in that they help reduce reliance on fossil-fuel-based automobiles. TUF also has special “green jobs” training in newer technologies like photo-voltaics.*

*O\*NET OnLine is a US Department of Labor job-search site that provides information about jobs in green and other sectors.*

*The Consortium for Worker Education is a network of labor- union-based education programs in New York City. Among its special industry-focused programs is CWE Green, “a network of workforce development providers focused on helping job-seekers and companies enter the growing green economy.”*

**“When nature is viewed as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society.”**

*Pope Francis I*

## **Type #3: Green services for adult learners to improve their access to environmentally-sustaining resources**

Eco-partners can help adults with basic skills limitations (and possibly their families and communities) access environment-sustaining services (e.g., soil testing, lead-paint removal, healthy foods, clean air, public transportation, weatherization). Here are examples adaptable by adult basic skills programs. Learners could be the beneficiaries and/or providers of such services:

*Toxic Soil Busters (TSB) employed ten Worcester, Mass. teens from 2005 to 2017 to offer soil testing, lead-safe landscaping services, outreach services, video production, and education (using skits, games, music, art) to local residents. TSB was structured as a cooperative workplace emphasizing peer leadership, youth empowerment, and job advancement opportunities.*

*Daily Table operates small, farmer-supplied supermarkets in two “food deserts” in Boston’s Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods (with more being planned). Its mission is “to help communities make great choices around food by making it easy for them to choose tasty, healthy, convenient and truly affordable meals and groceries.” Its Dorchester market includes a commercial kitchen and free classes in how to use and cook foods in new ways. Prices are significantly lower and*





### **Type #3: Green services for adult learners (cont'd.)**

*produce is fresh. The target audience is low-income families, and SNAP (food stamp) recipients are especially welcome. Volunteers and staff from local adult literacy programs support the program.*

**Groundwork Lawrence's Healthy Food Access Programs** combine access to healthy foods with education to improve the overall nutrition and public health of Lawrence (Massachusetts) residents. Activities include providing spaces to grow and purchase fresh, locally grown produce; education programs that include cooking classes; and a cooking club focused on integrating healthy foods into culturally appropriate meals. (One cooking class is targeted to Spanish-speaking residents.)

**The Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP)** is a youth-led environmental justice program in Boston's Roxbury community. Projects include lowering public transit fares for teens, reducing pollution from diesel vehicles, and improving resident access to healthy, affordable foods through

*community gardens. REEP also has used participatory action research to help communities understand and deal with pollution-related problems.*

**The Weatherization Assistance Program** helps low-income families to reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient.

### **Type #4: Basic skills supports for eco-partners to help them better work with clients and employees who have basic skills limitations**

Adult basic skills specialists can provide cultural guidance, referral, translation/interpreting, editing, and other services to help eco-friendly partners better work with clients and employees who have basic skills limitations. Here is an example:

**The San Diego Council on Literacy** has provided guidance to the Energy Innovation Center (a non-profit education program of San Diego Gas & Electric) to help its staff communicate more effectively with populations who have literacy limitations or are English language learners.

### **Type #5: Green facilities to help adult education buildings and operations be more environmentally sustainable**

Community colleges have taken the lead among U.S. educational institutions in implementing technologies and practices that protect the environment while, in many cases, cutting costs. These include switching to energy-saving heating, cooling, and lighting controls; LED lighting; and passive solar (e.g., to heat swimming pools) and photovoltaic equipment (e.g., using large rooftops to generate electricity from the sun).

Colleges have also updated their heating and air conditioning systems. In some cases, colleges use scheduling software to reduce the number of buildings and classrooms that need to be heated, cooled, and lighted. Some colleges use food composters to reduce the amount of food going into landfills while producing soil that can be used for landscaping and gardens.



## **Type #5: Green facilities** *(cont'd.)*

Many colleges operate buses and vans to transport students and staff to, from, and around campuses, thereby reducing reliance on cars that use fuel, pollute the air, and cause traffic congestion. And many college campuses have instituted weatherization programs, recycling and waste reduction activities, water-saving practices, purchasing of organic foods, and other environmental-sustainability activities (e.g., reminding employees to turn off lights, computers, and refrigerators when not in use -- or using electronic sensors to do so automatically).

While community colleges are not “adult basic skills programs” per se, many of these colleges in fact provide basic skills remediation classes (and therefore do fall under the heading of “basic skills education providers”) and also provide other services (e.g., job training classes) to people with basic skills limitations. Adult basic education programs might consider learning from and adopting some of these practices to make their own facilities “eco-friendly.” They would thereby conserve natural resources, save money, and provide an environment in which adult learners, staff, visitors, and partners can see environmental sustainability

being practiced. This exposure helps learners consider how they might institute similar practices in their homes, communities, and workplaces and pursue related careers.

Here are two adult education program examples:

***The Community Learning Center in Northampton, Massachusetts rents space in the James House, a city-owned building that is energy efficient and solar power equipped.***

***Union County (New Jersey) College has used refurbished equipment from its for-credit computer and information technology classrooms to create computer-equipped classrooms in a prisoner re-entry program and a retail training center where UCC’s non-credit division offered basic skills, computer, and career preparation courses.***

“The environmental crisis arises from a fundamental fault: our systems of production – in industry, agriculture, energy and transportation – essential as they are, make people sick and die.”

*Barry Commoner*

## **Type #6: Green service learning to help adult learners develop knowledge and skills through environmental community service**

While students in U.S. post-secondary, secondary, and even primary schools are encouraged to engage in community service activities, learners in adult basic skills programs are often not expected to do so.

That need not be the case, however, as community service and related project-based learning can be a very good way for adult learners to learn about community issues; develop particular basic skills, credentials, and networks they can apply to other areas of their lives (e.g., work, family, and civic roles); and get the satisfaction of being part of a team and contributing to community improvement. (Adult learner leadership efforts are often built around volunteer activities in which learners develop their leadership abilities by working with others to carry out tasks in their communities or in the program itself.)

One area of community service that adult basic skills programs might consider engaging learners in is environmental sustainability.

*(cont'd. on next page)* 11

“The environmental problems of developing countries are not the side effect of excessive industrialization but reflect the inadequacy of development.”

*Indira Gandhi*



## **Type #6: Green service learning** *(cont'd.)*

Students and staff might, for example, work with local partners to carry out neighborhood cleanups or operate community gardens. By reflecting on and discussing what they learned and achieved in these activities in a systematic way (and thereby moving from “community service” to “service learning”), learners can strengthen their abilities to deal with environmental issues they will interact with in work, family, and civic roles. Here are some examples:

**YouthBuild** is a national network that uses a pre-apprenticeship model to provide at-risk youth ages 16-24 with education and occupational skill development to obtain educational and occupational certification and get jobs in construction and other in-demand industries. Participants build housing for low-income or homeless individuals and families in their communities and engage in leadership development and community service activities. Special focus is placed on practices that conserve energy and otherwise protect natural resources.

*YouthBuild* works with such partners as the U.S. Department of Labor, the Green Building Council, and Home Builders Institute.

**The Tutorial Center's Youth Agriculture Program** in Vermont provides training and supports to help at-risk youth to learn agriculture and landscaping skills while doing community service activities (e.g., school and community vegetable gardens, civic landscaping, a children's outdoor play area, and food donations to needy residents).

**Groundwork Elizabeth's Green Team** provides youth in Union County, NJ with volunteer opportunities, “green infrastructure” job training, intergenerational activities with seniors, and summer education programs in which participants receive financial support. The program has “educated, invested in, touched and employed hundreds of diverse youth to effect change in themselves as they work to understand, improve and advocate for natural environments where they live, and in our society as a whole.” Many graduates have gone on to roles in non-profits and the private sector.

**The Louisiana Conservation Corps** “recruits people who have a passion for the environment and working outdoors, and an interest in gaining new skill sets and experiences. Participants engage in hands-on projects on public lands, coastal regions, and disaster areas (in) the natural landscapes of Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas.”

**Pacific Quest** is a wilderness therapy program in Hawai'i for struggling youth and young adults. It integrates environmental activities (e.g., sustainable horticulture) with psychiatric and health supports (e.g., nutrition, exercise, sleep), community service, experiential education, and occupational preparation.

“It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment.”

*Ansel Adams*

## **Type #7: Green advocacy and planning: Joint advocacy, awareness, planning, and fundraising efforts by environmental and adult education partners**

Adult education staff and students and representatives of eco-friendly organizations can help to generate support for the above-described collaborative efforts. This is particularly important at a time when the potential of and need for these joint activities are clear while funding and in-kind supports for such efforts are limited. (A decade ago, the federal government was investing in green job training. That funding has largely disappeared, though there is now a renewed interest at the federal and state levels in legislation related to jobs for environmental sustainability.)

Here are examples of advocacy, awareness-raising, planning, and fundraising that might be adapted by adult education providers and eco-partners:

**“I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people.”**

*Mahatma Gandhi*

*The Change Agent is a low-cost teaching resource published by the New England Literacy Resource Center and World Education. It features writings by adult learners that highlight ways that learners can be agents of change in their own lives and in their communities. Eco-sustainability is the main focus of such issues as “Staying Safe in a Toxic World,” “Climate Change,” and “Connections to Our Environment” and woven into other issues (“Transportation,” “Health,” “Technology,” “All About Food,” “Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs, and “Democracy in Action”).*

*State Environmental Literacy Plans are compiled and made available by the North American Association for Environmental Education.*

*Groundwork Elizabeth (NJ)’s annual “Tour de Elizabeth” bike tour is a fun fundraising/ awareness-raising/ community-building event. Groundwork staff have also successfully developed relationships with officials, corporations, public funders, and other partners who provide financial and in-kind supports to this environmental non-profit.*

*The Natural Resources Defense Council tracks environmental advocacy efforts in the U.S. and worldwide.*

*The Kresge Foundation’s Climate Change, Health & Equity Strategy supports local, regional, and state policies related to climate change and public health.*

*Kresge’s Environmental Programs (1) build capacity and commitment, (2) strengthen the evidence base and develop tools, and (3) transform key urban systems in support of environmental sustainability.*

*The National Environmental Education Foundation website provides information about grants and activities related to “Citizen Science,” “Girls + Technology,” “Take STEM Outside” and “Extreme Weather and Mental Health.”*

*The North Face Explore Fund “builds community, connects people to the benefits of outdoor exploration, and empowers individuals to be environmental stewards.”*

*The Society for Nonprofits has identified potential funders of environmental programs.*





## **Type #8: Green partnerships research to document and inform collaborations between adult basic education and eco-partners**

Here are examples of environmental research activities and documents -- representing various focal points and perspectives -- produced by adult education, environmental, workforce development, economic development, and social justice stakeholders. They might be built on and adapted for new adult education/eco-partner collaborations:

**Project Drawdown** summarizes data compiled by experts from multiple sectors and sources “to answer the fundamental question: how can we best remove carbon and other greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere? The research revealed that humanity has the means and techniques at hand . . . Humanity’s task is to accelerate the knowledge and growth of what is possible as soon as possible.”

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** describe what the rest of the world is saying and doing about environmentally-sustainable development.

**Earth Day, Planetary Boundaries, and the Green New Deal** argues for “system change, not business as usual” for an international response to “climate change (which) threatens our environment and our very existence. We have passed or are approaching several Planetary Boundaries outside of which human society may not survive.”

**Job Creation in a Green Economy: Developing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce** describes where “green jobs” fit into Michigan’s emerging economy, how partnerships among various stakeholders can move green job development forward, obstacles facing the field, and how non-traditional worker populations can participate in a more eco-friendly economy.

**The GreenWays Initiative of Jobs for the Future** explored how to integrate basic skills development with occupational skills training for green jobs. Its report describes field sites in Philadelphia and Detroit.

**LINCS (Literacy Information and Communication System)** is an on-line professional development service provided by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Its searchable resource collections, on-line courses and webinars, and discussion groups provide adult educators, adult learners, and others with opportunities to build expertise and networks on many aspects of adult basic education. Topics include environmental education and green job training.

**The ABE Clean Energy Ambassadors Curriculum Resource Guide** describes a project by the National College Transition Network to strengthen the on-ramp to clean energy occupations for Massachusetts adult basic education (ABE) students.

“Sustainable development is the pathway to the future we want for all. It offers a framework to generate economic growth, achieve social justice, exercise environmental stewardship, and strengthen governance.”

*Ban Ki-moon*

## Type #8: Green partnerships research (cont'd.)



***The Healthcare Career Advancement Program*** (funded by the U.S. Department of Labor) supported green jobs development in the healthcare industry. Its 2013 report describes how healthcare workers can “improve the environmental sustainability of their employers and the health of workers and patients” and how a management-labor joint program “supported systems change and built new roles for these workers. It empowered them to contribute to triple bottom line outcomes in support of People (patients, workers, the community), Planet (environmental sustainability and a lower carbon footprint), and Profit (cost savings for the institutions).”



***Making Green Work: Best Practices in Green-Collar Job Training*** describes the Green Collar Jobs Campaign of the Ella Baker Center in Oakland, California. “We advocate for the creation of ‘green-collar’ jobs (quality, career-track, skilled, hands-on jobs in industries like renewable energy, water and energy efficiency, green building, habitat restoration, sustainable agriculture, and more), especially for low-income communities, communities of color and women. We (build) partnerships with cross-sector coalitions that include policy makers, organized labor, green businesses, environmental organizations, social justice groups, education and training institutions.”



***The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*** is a 2008 book by Van Jones that outlines a plan for simultaneously solving socioeconomic inequality and environmental problems. The book is a detailed proposal for a “green new deal” to create thousands of low- and medium-skill jobs that help conserve energy (for example, insulating older homes and buildings) or use alternate energy sources (solar panels).

***The Power of Green*** is a 2007 article by Thomas L. Friedman arguing for green jobs as a strategy for three major issues: environmental sustainability, employment, and national security.

***The Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee*** conducted a participatory action research project with members of two communities impacted by environmental hazards. Residents learned how to collect and assess information and then take legal action to solve waste-disposal problems that had major implications for their health. (***The Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project*** described on page 10 uses a similar action research approach.)



## **Type #9: Joint professional development**

To foster the above-described collaborations, partners will need to build trust, expertise, and communication channels. One very good way to do this is through various kinds of cross-training activities.

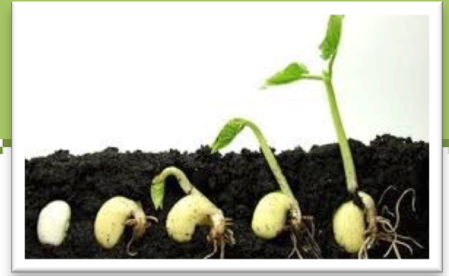
These can include formal training sessions, sharing of information in digital and print forms, project-based learning activities in which partners carry out meaningful tasks (e.g., developing of project plans, carrying out educational and environmental activities together) while reflecting on what they learn in the process, internships and site visits, and mentoring relationships. Such joint professional development can occur at the start of a partnership as well as periodically after the partnership is underway.



“You must unite behind the science. You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up can never be an option.”

*Greta Thunberg  
to U.S. Congress,  
September 17, 2019*





## Part 4: How to Get Started

You have now seen some ways that adult basic education and environmental organizations can work together. But now what? How do you decide whether and how to pursue one or more of these options? Here are some suggestions for how you might get started.

### How adult basic education organizations can get started

a. Review your options.

With input, when feasible, from other adult education organizations and environmental organizations at state or national levels, identify which of the above-described collaborations with eco-partners might be a good match and priority for you.

b. Draft some initial goals and plans.

Assess your adult education organization's strengths and limitations and the environmental needs and strengths of your adult learners and their communities. Set some primary and secondary (short- and longer-term) goals and develop an initial draft plan for how you and your partners might meet those goals.

For example, if you would like to introduce or expand environmental education and training activities for your adult learners, clarify:

- How many learners might participate.
- The type of environmental instruction available to them related to “green” consumer behavior or “green” workplace jobs and practices.
- What environmental education and job

training you would now like to focus on.

- Where such activities might fit into your current program's larger curriculum, schedule, facilities, instructor team . . .
  - Potential environmental partners you might work with and questions you'd like to ask them.
- c. Identify and reach out to appropriate environmental organizations to explore whether and how you might form a short-term and/or longer-term partnership. Consult state-level and local-level environmental agencies and networks and university-based environmental programs to . . .
- Review options for collaboration described earlier in this guide and the draft plans you've come up with so far.
  - Ask for feedback from those environmental organizations about your draft plan and appropriate environmental partners you might work with (i.e., organizations whose missions, expertise, and other resources match your interests).
  - Clarify how your adult education organization might benefit the eco-partners you are considering (e.g., by helping them serve an important segment of the community or workforce).
  - Identify potential next steps, responsibilities, and questions to consider as you move forward.

## How to Get Started *(cont'd.)*

### How eco-partners can get started

a. Review your options.

With input from other relevant environmental organizations at state or national levels when feasible, identify which of the above-described collaborations with adult education organizations might be a good match and a priority for you.

b. Draft some initial goals and plans.

Considering your environmental organization's strengths and limitations and the environmental needs and strengths of the communities you currently work with, set some primary and secondary (short- and longer-term) goals for collaborations with adult education organizations. Develop an initial draft plan for how you and adult education partners might meet those goals.

For example if you would like to introduce or expand environmental education and training activities for adult education students, clarify:

- How many learners you might be able to serve.
- The type of environmental instruction you might provide related to “green” consumer, community, or workplace practices.

- What you'd need to know from potential adult education partners about where such educational activities might fit into their current program's larger curriculum, schedule, facilities, instructor team, etc.

c. Identify and reach out to appropriate adult education organizations (See the National Literacy Directory at <https://www.nld.org>.) to explore whether and how you might form a short-term and/or longer-term partnership. Consult state- and local-level adult education agencies and networks and university-based adult education programs to . . .

- Review the options for collaboration described earlier in this guide and the draft plans you've come up with so far.
- Ask for feedback from those adult education organizations about your draft plan and possible adult education partners (i.e., organizations whose missions, expertise, and other resources match your interests).
- Clarify how your environmental organization might benefit the adult education organizations you are considering (e.g., by helping them respond to the environmental needs of an important segment of the community or workforce).
- Identify potential next steps, responsibilities, and questions to consider as you move forward.

“If you come across a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young.”

*Deuteronomy 22:6*



## In conclusion . . .

*We salute the many people responsible for the innovative environmental activities described in this guide.*

*Building on these examples, forward-thinking supporters of environmental sustainability and adult basic education now have opportunities to make a difference on the vitally-important, overlapping issues of ecological well-being, environmental health, workforce and economic development, adult basic education, and social justice.*

*By collaborating in well-planned, meaningful ways, these two partners can target their resources to common goals while also building trusting relationships for the future. **Such joint efforts are vital if our nation – and our world – are to leave a livable planet for the next generation.***

*We welcome your thoughtful, informed, and patient leadership at this time of challenge -- and opportunity.*



*Written and designed by Paul Jurmo ([www.pauljurmo.info](http://www.pauljurmo.info)) with research and editing help from Alex Risley-Schroeder, David Rosen, Janet Isserlis, Barbara Krol-Sinclair, Jose Cruz, Rob Sheppard, Cynthia Peters, Jennifer Thompson, Emma Broderick, Samantha Bailo, and Eric Jurmo. And thanks to the Literacy Information and Communication System ([www.lincs.ed.gov](http://www.lincs.ed.gov)) for providing access to some of the documents cited here.*



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