



# Cultivating a greener workforce

## A new approach benefits employees and the environment.

By Leanne

> Krueger-Braneky

> Excitement about green-collar jobs is sweeping our country: Presidential candidates have used the term in recent campaign speeches, and President Bush recently signed the Green Jobs Act of 2007, creating \$125 million in funding for green-collar job development, including \$25 million for green pathways out of poverty.

> Green-collar jobs, as defined by a November 2007 study by the City of Berkeley, Calif., are blue-collar jobs in businesses that improve environmental quality. The study cited such examples as biodiesel production and gas station jobs, green building, organic food production, large-scale composting, recycling, and public transit.

> Since jobs such as these often require similar levels of vocational training as traditional blue-collar jobs - and pay a living wage - they have a huge potential to plug holes in the Greater Philadelphia economy. In 1969, for example, there were more than 650,000 manufacturing jobs in the region. By 2005, only 250,000 manufacturing jobs remained - a loss of more than 400,000 jobs in fewer than four decades.

> The Oakland Green Jobs Corps in California is one model for green-collar job training. A partnership of local organizations surveyed existing green businesses and discovered what jobs were needed. They then designed a nine-month program that combines a six-month paid internship with three months of services bridging the gap from unemployment to employment. Those services include basic literacy, life skills, job-readiness training, financial management, and environmental awareness.

> The designer of Oakland's Green Jobs Corps, Van Jones, has said there is no formula for the perfect green-collar job-training program since its model and others in place are only about a year old. If Philadelphia-area officials were to pursue this type of program, they would need to create something that works specifically for our region.

> New York City, Newark and Cleveland also are putting programs together.

> Fortunately, we have a strong foundation on which to build. Oakland's first step in developing the job training program was to survey 267 green businesses about their needs for workers. They then built a curriculum around those needs.

> Philadelphia has a bigger opportunity: the combined membership of my organization, the Sustainable Business Network, and the Delaware Valley Green Building Council is more than 1,000 companies. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is currently inventorying eco-industries in the region and soon will identify additional companies beyond our members.

> The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia is conducting research to identify organizations that are already training green-collar workers in the Philadelphia region. While our region does not have a comprehensive strategy right now, there are small pockets of work happening that could lay a foundation for a regional strategy.

> Developing a program that works in our area will require a coalition of stakeholders that includes green business leaders, local government, workforce development, community colleges and technical institutes, youth organizations, and investors.

> During a visit to Philadelphia in February, Jones told an audience of more than 600 that by connecting the people doing the work to those who most need the work, a strategy can be created that will connect low-income workers with economic opportunities in the green business sector.

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