



Green Building Alliance Receives \$1.48 Million Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC) Grant from U.S. Dept of Labor

Three-year grant will support green building workforce development, education and training in rural communities across southwestern Pennsylvania

(PITTSBURGH) September 4, 2024 - Green Building Alliance (GBA) has been [awarded a three-year, \\$1.48 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor \(DOL\) Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities \(WORC\)](#) fund to launch its **Green Pathways Initiative**, a workforce development, training and education program that will address critical green building and clean energy employment needs in southwestern Pennsylvania.

GBA's award is one of \$49 million in grant awards announced by the DOL, in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission, Delta Regional Authority and the Northern Border Regional Commission to prepare workers for good-quality, secure jobs in high-demand industries in their communities.

The Green Pathways Initiative will engage with rural communities in Allegheny, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland counties, and provide workers and students with training, credentials, and knowledge to pursue well-paying jobs in the rapidly growing green building design, operations, services and construction sectors. GBA will partner with regional trade unions, workforce development boards, private employers, PA CareerLink Agencies, high schools, technical institutes, and community and technical colleges to:

- Conduct green building trades training seminars for new entrant and incumbent workers. Seminars will cover energy efficient building operations, facilitate clean energy career exploration, and highlight the growing demand for green building and sustainability skills emerging in the region.
- Present industry-recognized upskilling programs and stackable credentials such as the Green Professional Training (GPRO) Operations & Maintenance course and U.S. Green Building Council LEED Green Associate training, in the rural project area.

Curriculum will help students and workers develop in-demand "green skills" that position them to enter the clean energy workforce or enhance their current position. In addition to LEED, programs may involve Living Future Accreditation, WELL Accredited Professional credentials, Just Communities Accredited Practitioner (AP) credentials, BPI Certified Professional, and other sustainable construction and building performance enhancement credentials and skills.

- Coordinate and host youth workforce training seminars and high school educational conferences to increase environmental literacy and exposure to green

building, sustainability and clean energy careers. Seminar and conference curriculum will provide foundational green skills workforce training, foster interest in the green construction industry, and prepare youth for a sustainable future.

In a press release issued today announcing the grant awardees, Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su stated:

“With this investment, we’re not just creating good-paying jobs in rural areas across the country, we’re breaking down barriers that have held back our communities for too long,” said Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su. “By providing access to childcare, training and support services, we’re building an opportunity infrastructure to help people thrive where they call home. This is about more than just economic growth; it’s about ensuring that every American has the opportunity to succeed, no matter where they live.”

According to the [2023 Energy Efficiency Workforce Needs Report](#) from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), Pennsylvania will require a significant growth in efficiency and electrification employment to meet increasing demand, with an estimated 2,000+ Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVAC/R) Mechanics and Installers needed every year for the next 10 years – nearly four and half times the current average rate of employees entering the efficiency workforce each year.

“With demand for green building skills rising, the Department of Labor WORC grant will enable GBA to improve career mobility for rural workers by equipping them with the expertise and credentials that employers actively seek and prepare them to achieve economic mobility,” says GBA CEO Jenna Cramer. “Our Green Pathways Initiative will also include workforce training seminars in green building foundational skills for youth, and our high school educational conferences will support equitable transitions to clean energy employment and introduce well-paying, in demand sustainable building industry career opportunities to students.”

[A recent Federal Reserve report shows that](#) individuals in rural Pennsylvania and other states face higher barriers to employment than other workers in the state. These include a lack of reliable transportation options, poor internet access, and lack of affordable childcare. These types of barriers can prevent workers from accessing the training and education opportunities required to enter the clean energy and green building workforce. To address these challenges, GBA will partner with regional and local organizations to conduct outreach and engagement with marginalized rural communities. Partners will include **Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board** (serving Beaver, Washington, and Greene Counties), **Southwest Training Services, Inc.** (serving Washington and Greene Counties), **Westmoreland Fayette Workforce Investment Board**, and **Intermediate Unit 1** (serving Fayette, Greene, and Washington Counties), as well as trade unions, community and technical colleges, and private employers.

“The Green Pathways Initiative builds on GBA’s three decades of expertise in green building training and education, enabling us to broaden our reach and impact into rural areas across southwestern Pennsylvania,” says GBA Vice President of Education & Communications Leslie Montgomery. “Our upskilling and credentialing programs will expand the great work of partners across the six-county

region, all of whom have a track record of success working in their communities. We look forward to collaborating with our partners as well as with private employers to grow economic mobility for workers, and we are excited to inspire the next generation to recognize the wealth of career opportunities in the green building and clean energy sectors.”

To ensure equitable access to workforce training seminars and high school educational conferences, a portion of grant funding will be used to cover transportation costs for students and youth.

Southwestern Pennsylvania’s MEP Center Affiliate, [Catalyst Connection](#), is also among the WORC grant recipients and will receive \$1.5 million in funding.

Read the full Department of Labor WORC grant release [here](#).

For more information on the Green Pathways Initiative, reach out to Green Building Alliance at info@gbapgh.org.

About Green Building Alliance

Green Building Alliance (GBA) positively transforms the world through the built environment to create a sustainable, healthy, and just future for everyone. As Western Pennsylvania’s authority on sustainable design, GBA drives the market for healthy communities while equipping designers, manufacturers, tradespersons, developers, students and policymakers to catalyze systemic change. GBA manages the largest 2030 District in North America (the Pittsburgh 2030 District), and in 2019, established Greater Pittsburgh as the 2nd International Center of Excellence on High Performance Building in the world. GBA partners across Western Pennsylvania, with strategic alliances including the 2030 District Network, United Nations, U.S. Green Building Council, and International Living Future Institute.

The [Just Transition Fund](#) provided support to GBA for development and submission of its Dept. of Labor WORC grant application.

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