



Overview of Green Curriculum for Frontline Workers



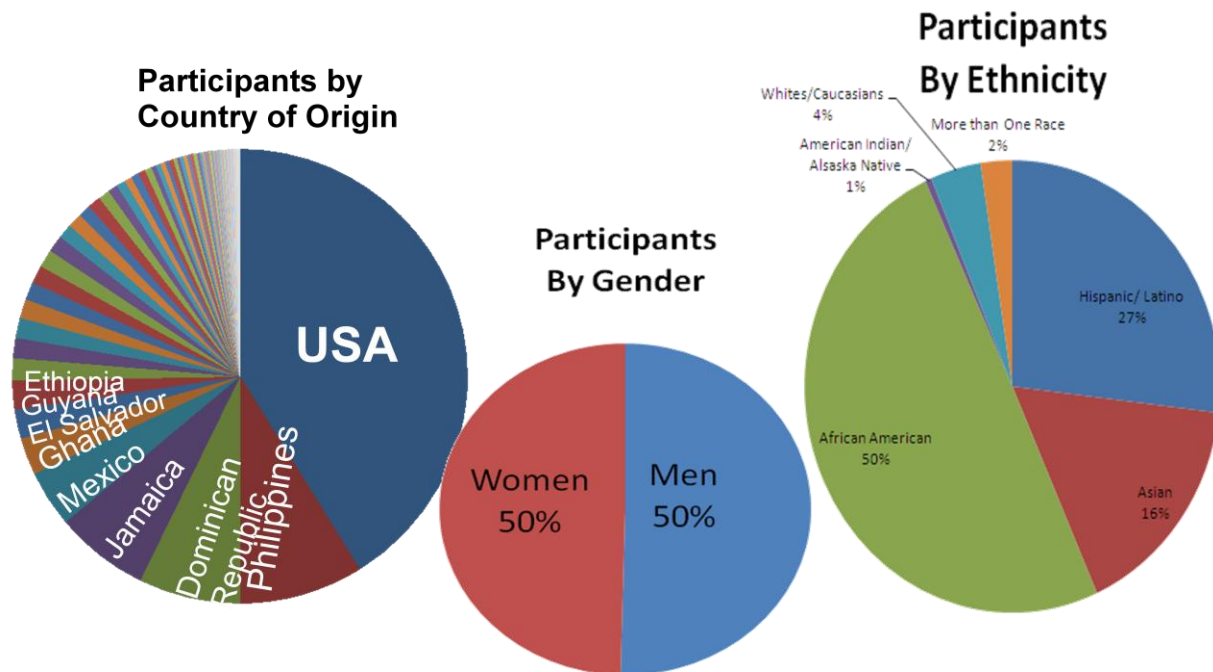
Introduction and Overview

Communities around the world are feeling the effects of an environment in distress. Chemical contamination of air and water, overuse of natural resources, and sudden changes in climate can lead to a range of health problems that our healthcare systems must address. At the same time, the healthcare industry itself is a major user of natural resources and a significant contributor to waste and environmental pollution. Hospitals use vast amounts of water and electricity. They also dispose of tons of waste which often end up in polluting incinerators or in landfills, producing greenhouse gases and emitting toxic substances and heavy metals. The national and international dialogues on environmental sustainability have never been more urgent, and the healthcare industry is as much a part of the problem as it is a key player in addressing public health problems generated by the environmental crisis.

Frontline Green Careers is an innovative program that addresses this paradox. The initiative, built by H-CAP and funded through an Energy Training Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, brought labor and management together to impact healthcare's Triple Bottom Line: People (patients, workers, and the community); Planet (the environment) and Profits (costs and institutional viability). Our approach has three central components:

1. Transformative education for Environmental Service (EVS) workers (and, in some cases, Food and Nutrition Workers). Our model teaches effective green practices for the workplace, bolsters critical thinking skills, and supports worker engagement throughout the learning process and beyond. Frontline workers receive training in a Core Green Curriculum, led by worker/supervisor pairs who are themselves prepared through a Train the Trainer Program. Custom training in sustainability practices for department level labor/management partners is also available where applicable.
2. The creation and support of labor/management partnerships for specific projects with measureable outcomes that support environmental sustainability and save money.
3. A college certificate program that supports entry into a career in sustainability practices in healthcare and other sectors.

In the grant period, the program was piloted in 4 regions with 11 employers and 4 SEIU locals, involving approximately 3,000 participants who are widely diverse in ethnicity, country of origin, and educational background. Post grant, some project sites are maintaining or expanding the program. Other employers are working together with their labor partners to find the resources to begin new programs for their institutions.



A key strength of our approach is its validation of frontline workers as full members of the institution’s care team. Our educational model helps participants to recognize, often for the first time, their contributions to cost savings, environmental sustainability, and healthy outcomes for patients. Proud of our program success, we are ready to share this model, expand our work, and bring the program to scale in places where unions and employers are willing to work together for specific outcomes that support the Triple Bottom Line.

Overview of the Educational Model

The educational model in Frontline Green Careers is an innovative approach to worker training. More traditional, “top-down” trainings often seek to condition new behaviors and practices into workers, often without input from the workers themselves or even their supervisors. In these scenarios, workers are presented with new information or skills and training, and success is determined by the level or rate of implementation of new practices. In the model we have developed, workers learn why change is happening, what the impact of that change will be to themselves and their jobs, and also, with their front line supervisors, they have a say in how that change is enacted. This approach allows them to draw connections between their work and the successful functioning of the facility as a whole. With this sense of agency and validation of their perspective and experience, workers become invested in change.

Our educational model is participatory and grounded in the principles of adult learning. Adult learning theories speak to the importance of connecting new knowledge to the needs, concerns, and experiences of adult learners. To ensure that workers are engaged and to meet the objectives of the project, the training provides workers and their supervisors with not only an understanding of what needs to be done, but also the why and how of doing it. Throughout the Core Curriculum, participants are encouraged to reflect on their own life experiences and draw connections between work, the health of the patients, the economic viability of the facility, and

the larger issues of environmental sustainability. Workers learn to see themselves as change agents and as critical thinkers with a voice in the process.

ACTIVITY	
Title:	<i>Our Years of Experience</i>
Purpose:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Acknowledge years of experience in an EVS unit.Bring workers voices into the room and validate participation.
Materials Needed:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Handout #1: Our Years of ServicePens/Pencils
Instructional Strategy:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Discussion GroupReading/Writing and simple Math ActivityPrior Knowledge Activation (lays the groundwork for subsequent activities)

Among the elements that make our approach effective is an emphasis on critical thinking skills, environmental science, literacy, and numeracy skills. Participants are encouraged to gather, interpret, and synthesize information, solve problems with co-workers, and collaboratively design solutions that they believe will succeed in their workplace contexts. Our focus on vocabulary-building, basic science, literacy, and numeracy (pertaining to measurement and to understanding cost savings) is appropriate and useful among a low-wage workforce with a high level of linguistic and cultural diversity. These more academic elements were included not only to help spark interest in the topics, but also to provide workers with a taste for further learning and for career advancement, both of which are opportunities built into the model.

Word	Meaning
1. C-Diff	One specific type of infection patients can get at a hospital. It causes watery diarrhea and stomach pain. C-diff is a short word for Clostridium difficile.
2. Hospital Acquired Infection (HAI)	An infection that patients can get at a hospital. They do not have this when they come in. There are many types of hospital acquired infections. HAI is a short word for hospital acquired infection.
3. MRSA	A second specific type of infection patients can get at a hospital. It can cause infections in many different areas of the body or pneumonia. MRSA is a short word for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus.
4. VRE	A third specific type of infection patients can get at a hospital. It gets its name from a common drug that does not kill it, Vancomycin. VRE is short for vancomycin-resistant enterococci.
5. Green Cleaning	Cleaning that uses less toxic chemicals, tools that use less water or energy, and procedures that save time and energy all while keeping employees, patients, and families safe.

Components of the Model

In the following paragraphs, we describe in more detail and give illustrative examples of the three main components of the Frontline Green Careers educational model.

The Core Green Curriculum

The Core Green Curriculum is comprised of 7 modules that are each approximately 2 hours in length (90 minute versions are also available) delivered on work time. Each module covers a sustainability topic, or “bucket”, as we call them:

1. *Seeing Green* is an introductory module which introduces the concept of “greening” EVS work and builds basic understanding of why environmental sustainability is important to healthcare and the community.
2. *Talking about Green* is the communication module, helping participants practice the essential skills necessary for communicating about change in different areas of the hospital and for creating an inclusive,



respectful learning environment.

3. *Reduction of Waste* focuses on the difference between waste and trash, methods of handling materials, and how proper handling, disposal, and the use of recycling can reduce hospital costs and reduce the negative environmental consequences of waste.
4. *Water Conservation* explains how EVS workers can help the hospital lower water use while minimizing the release of toxic waste into the environment.
5. *Energy Conservation* helps participants understand how energy can be saved at the hospital and at home and how energy conservation impacts costs and the environment.
6. *Reduction of Hospital Acquired Infections (HAIs)* introduces EVS workers to their own key roles in reducing infection through proper cleaning and disinfecting.
7. *Greening Our Work* outlines health and safety concerns around toxic chemicals and “green” products, and also lists ways to reduce the risk of workplace injuries when moving, lifting, pushing, and pulling.

Each module follows a standardized structure that guides participants through a process of introduction to the topic, reflecting on their own experience with the topic, learning new information through participatory activities, and an assessment. The framework and predictability of the structure supports learning and also makes the course delivery easier for the new trainers who deliver the instruction:

I. Welcome

In this section, trainers welcome participants, make introductions, review class objectives and agenda, review a topical vocabulary list that is part of every module, and transition to the training topic.

II. Anchoring Exercise

This activity connects the information contained in the module to the participants’ experience. It activates prior knowledge and sets the stage for learning.

III. Core Activity

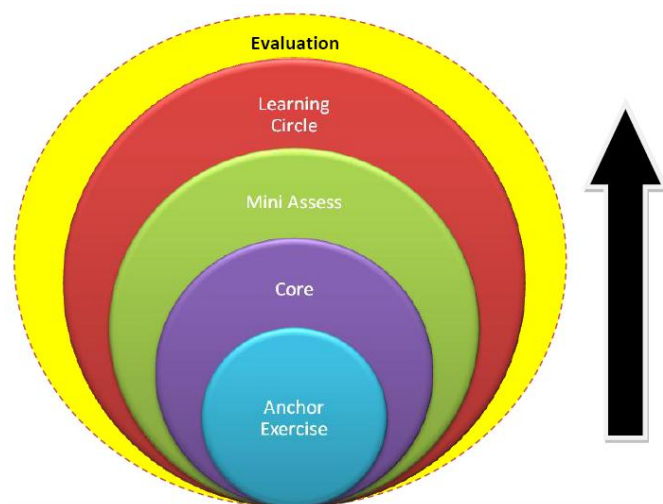
This is the main activity of the module that introduces new concepts and builds upon previously introduced concepts. The core activity incorporates vocabulary, math, basic science, and an application or assessment exercise.

IV. Learning Circle

Here, participants share what they learned and how they plan to put it into practice at work and perhaps in other parts of their lives.

V. Evaluation

Participants fill out an evaluations form at the end of each module.



Training of Trainers



Worker/Supervisor pairs attended a 36-hour Train the Trainer (TTT) course to become Peer Trainers in the Frontline Green Careers Program. The TTT introduces principles of adult learning, co-facilitation, and presentation, and provides extensive opportunities to practice these skills in a supportive environment. Trainers also learn techniques for working with adult English language learners and participants with low literacy. At the conclusion of this training, the teams are prepared to deliver the 7 modules. Moreover, these trainers become institutional resources to support future training in their departments and throughout the hospital.

Sustainability in Healthcare Course, Projects, and Green Lead Positions

As mentioned above, the educational model incorporates elements of basic environmental science and critical thinking skills that sparked interest among a number of participants in furthering their education and careers in fields related to environmental sustainability. Workers and supervisors who wished to deepen their understanding of environmental sustainability in healthcare and develop their expertise in developing green triple bottom line projects enrolled, for academic credit, in a college-based certificate program called Sustainability in Healthcare. The curriculum was developed by North Seattle Community College in collaboration with H-CAP and was delivered by colleges in all regions where the program was implemented. It employs a co-instructional model in which an ESL/ABE instructor works alongside a content-area instructor. The course of study is rigorous, demanding research, writing and presentation skills. As a capstone task, participants created a project that supported a Triple Bottom Line outcome. It was presented to the labor/management partnership with the goal of implementation at the institution. Projects have included recycling and composting initiatives, transitions to the use of green chemicals, implementation of a rechargeable battery program and a variety of waste reduction efforts, including recycling in the OR, all with significant cost savings to the institutions. In addition, workers who completed this course and received certification were qualified (as agreed to by labor and management in a majority of the program sites) to apply for a new position called a Green Lead or similar new upgraded job. Like the Training of Trainers described above, the Green Lead positions contribute to the sustainability of the Frontline Green Careers program beyond the initial project period.

What Participants are Saying

Participants in the program have reported transformative results from their training experiences, improved outlook on their jobs and their role within the healthcare institution, and a sense of empowerment about their ability to impact the Triple Bottom Line and why it is important to do so. Here is what they are saying:

<p>"I want to be the trainer that is able to learn with my peers but also support them as they learn about greening the hospital." <i>Jimmy Grisby, LAC+USC Med Center, Los Angeles, Building Service Worker, SEIU Local 721</i></p>	
<p>"We developed the labor-management committee early on and the successful outcomes of the project were in part a result of that. Having information from different perspectives helps develop a better overall program." <i>Juan Escalante, EVS Manager, NW Hospital & Medical Ctr.</i></p>	

<p>"This training has meant that I can take the lead on building a better environment for my daughter." <i>- Clive Green, NYU Langone Medical Center, 1199SEIU, NY.</i></p>	
<p>"The folks that participated in this program will never be the same. They actually had a transformation from what they used to be and the boundaries they themselves had set mentally to opportunities that came to them." <i>- Carlos Magdaleno, SEIU Local 721, Organizer</i></p>	

Outcomes

Outcomes of the Frontline Green Careers program have impacted the Triple Bottom Line qualitatively and quantitatively. We saw the development of a front line workforce conscious of its role in creating a sustainable environment and quality healthcare system. We saw participants become aware of the need for change and creative problem solving. We saw intriguing and initial outcomes that included the reduction of institutions' carbon footprint and initial cost savings that could only increase as the programs are sustained and expanded. Improvements in both patient and worker safety and health showed promise. In several institutions, there was a marked increase in patient satisfaction scores as they related to the EVS department. As the healthcare industry moves forward with the Affordable Care Act and seeks to provide quality care at a lowered cost, we believe this type of program will support those efforts.

References

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