

## Implementing ARRA Design Snapshot

# California's Green Jobs Corps: Building Green Workforce Region-wide

August 2009

Using a portion of the discretionary [Workforce Investment Act](#) funds available to states through ARRA, California is piloting a regionally-based, public-private partnership-driven, green jobs training program for at-risk youth. [The California Green Jobs Corps](#) has invested \$10 million of ARRA funds to leverage another \$10 million in local resources to bring together collaborations of workforce investment boards, community colleges, nonprofits, and employers to provide targeted youth with opportunities for skills training, continuing education, and community service to contribute to emerging regional green economies.

California's Green Job Corps	
<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide regionally-tailored green skills training, continuing education, job placement and volunteering opportunities to at-risk youth
<b>Lead entity:</b>	State agency
<b>Partners:</b>	State and local agencies, workforce investment boards, community colleges, nonprofits, and businesses
<b>ARRA focus:</b>	15 percent governor's discretionary Workforce Investment Act funds
<b>Scale:</b>	Statewide, clustered in nine economic regions
<b>Strategies:</b>	Adopts multi-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral approaches
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The framework for the Green Jobs Corps program draws on a long-standing state economic strategy that identifies nine economic regions in California and seeks to address the unique strengths and weaknesses of each. Earlier this year, the state asked key leaders from each region to submit regional recovery plans to guide overall ARRA implementation at the state-level (described in: "Guiding State Stimulus Spending," another "design snapshot" in this Brookings series). For the Green Jobs Corps program, in particular, the state invited multi-sector partnerships from each region to competitively apply for a portion of ARRA's 15 percent governor's discretionary Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds to implement regionally-tailored efforts to spur green-friendly economic growth, revive communities, and help create a cleaner environment. Based on regional

conditions, the program aims to train at-risk youth in energy efficiency, green construction, and other green jobs, as they continue their education and volunteer in environmental efforts, such as computer recycling for nonprofits and weatherization assistance for seniors.

In designing the Green Job Corps approach, the state brought together a cross-agency team of relevant departments to successfully combine different program elements (i.e., jobs, training, and service) and

select winning projects. The program is housed under [CaliforniaVolunteers](#), the state service commission which has extensive experience managing grant-funded public-private partnerships to advance volunteering statewide. The [California Employment Development Department](#) (EDD) brings knowledge of connecting job seekers and employers; the [California Workforce Investment Board](#) (the board) brings experience engaging with local job training providers; and the [California Labor and Workforce Development Agency](#), which oversees both EDD and the board, connects this program to state-level coordination of all state-funded workforce programs. This cross-agency team announced the Green Jobs Corps competition in mid-March 2009, accepted grants proposals during May 2009, and selected 11 winners from six of the state's nine economic regions by the end of June 2009. The selection panel judged proposals according to their attention to local needs, past performance of the lead and partner applicants, the innovativeness of training curricula, standards for skills certification, and feasibility for successful youth job placement. The winning groups received awards ranging from \$650,000 to nearly \$1 million to run 20-month pilot projects in their respective regions expected to serve a total of 1,500 youth statewide.

A key program principle for the Green Jobs Corp is the requirement for multi-sector partnerships of WIBs, community colleges, nonprofits, and business to collaborate on this endeavor in each region. The leading state agencies considered this sort of consortia model as the most effective way to deliver regional workforce development. The local WIBs outreach to the targeted population and connect with skills training providers; the community colleges teach relevant certificate programs; the nonprofits provide wrap-around social services to help at-risk youth complete their programs; and businesses help implementation stay focused on meeting actual employer needs. By clearly mandating these partnerships in its application, the Green Jobs Corps program saw applicants deliver on workable multi-sector collaborative approaches that engage the strengths of each type of entity and leverage their resources. Indeed, through these public-private partnerships, the Green Jobs Corps raised an additional \$10 million in funds and in-kind resources from local sources to augment the \$10 million of ARRA funding.

While the state mandated partnerships, specific details were left to the discretion of regional stakeholders, and a variety of models emerged among winning candidates. The Green Jobs Corps application deliberately kept the definitions for "at-risk youth" and "green jobs" flexible so that applicants could best tailor their proposals to their regional populations, needs, and opportunities. There were also differences across partnership characteristics, primary objectives, and project approaches. Winning proposals were split roughly evenly between the two types of entities allowed to lead Green Jobs Corps partnerships: six have public workforce agencies as lead entities and five have community colleges. Four of the 11 projects are also explicitly multi-jurisdictional. While the WIB-led projects tend to emphasize jobs training, the community college-led efforts tend to encourage completion of two-year certificate-granting courses. Further, some initiatives approach their projects from the perspective of the targeted labor pool and what it needs to upgrade green skills, while others take a more industry-centric focus, identifying and aiming to fill unmet green employment demands in different industry segments.

For California, the Green Jobs Corps is an ARRA-funded experiment that combines direct state-level management with regional variation to bring the right partners and resources together around the state to take a new approach to tackling youth workforce development.

## **The Implementing ARRA Series**

America's current economic crisis is not only a national crisis. It is also a metropolitan crisis. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the progress of creative metropolitan leaders who are leveraging the myriad resources provided by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). To that end, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Implementing ARRA Series is tracking the implementation work of metropolitan leaders, assessing their progress and struggles, and extracting from the innovators' experiences ideas for short- and long-term federal policy reforms. Ultimately it is hoped the series will serve as a resource for best-practice exchange among regions and a source of ideas for designing the next generation of metro-friendly federal policies.

### **For More Information**

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