



### Introduction

[“Roots of Success”](#) (RoS) is an empowering environmental literacy and job training program that prepares youth and adults to access jobs and career pathways in environmental fields, and to improve environmental conditions in their communities. The program is centered around a federal and California state registered Department of Labor Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship and a 10-module course:

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| 1) Fundamentals of Environmental Literacy | 6) Building                                     |
| 2) Water                                  | 7) Health, Food & Agriculture                   |
| 3) Waste                                  | 8) Community Organizing & Leadership            |
| 4) Transportation                         | 9) Financial Literacy & Social Entrepreneurship |
| 5) Energy                                 | 10) Application & Practice                      |

The program is offered in a wide range of settings that include: high schools, youth programs, adult schools, job training programs, reentry programs, prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities. Since 2009, the program has been offered in over 600 schools and organizations throughout the United States; over 26,000 youth and adults have gone through the program, more than 12,000 took the course while incarcerated.

The 10-module Pre-Apprenticeship course is taught by instructors who are trained and certified to teach a curriculum that deepens student’s understanding of environmental problems and solutions, strengthens their academic, professional, financial, social entrepreneurship, and advocacy skills, ensures they acquire the vocabulary crucial for working in environmental fields, inspires them to explore environmental careers, and prepares them to access jobs and career pathways in the water, waste, transportation, energy, building, food, open space, and advocacy sectors. Leadership development is a key aspect of the program, providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to identify problems, actively participate in discussions about environmental issues, explore innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to environmental challenges, and address environmental problems and injustices in their communities.

Students who complete the Pre-Apprenticeship earn an “Environmental Specialist” credential. In California, high school students who complete the course can also receive 6 units of college credit in the CSU system. All graduates of the Pre-Apprenticeship program are eligible to enroll in the Roots of Success Apprenticeship, which is the first and only federal and California state registered DOL Apprenticeship that trains and mentors instructors to earn a “CTE Environmental Literacy Instructor” credential.



Roots of Success graduates are working in a wide range of environmental fields and are addressing environmental challenges and injustices in their communities. A study conducted with programs that offered Roots of Success for at least two years in community settings found that 100% of program directors surveyed observed positive behavioral changes in participants and that in a sample of 1,200 graduates 98% felt they were better prepared for job interviews, 75% found employment within 3 months, 70% remained employed 6 months later, and among those who were employed, 80% were working in environmental fields.

Course evaluations from instructors teaching in schools, community, and carceral settings consistently show that the Roots of Success course provides many benefits for students that include expanding their understanding of social and environmental justice issues, inspiring their community engagement, and supporting their professional development.

### **Equity Focus**

The Roots of Success program is designed to meet the needs of students from communities heavily affected by poverty, unemployment, incarceration, and environmental injustice. Many of these individuals have been failed or poorly served by the education system and face barriers to accessing stable, family-supporting jobs. To meet the needs of this population, the pedagogical approach encourages students to use their lived experience as the foundation upon which to build further knowledge and skills, often has students working in small groups, and supports active participation in the learning process.

The program design is trauma-informed, culturally competent, easy to implement, cost effective, provides graduates with industry recognized credentials, and is adaptable for both community and carceral settings.

In prisons, the Roots of Success program is usually taught by incarcerated men and women who are paid full time to teach the course to their peers and can also be taught by staff. Many Roots of Success instructors are serving long and life sentences and working with the Roots of Success program gives these men and women an opportunity to help others. The data we have collected for over a decade shows that participants who go through the Roots of Success course while incarcerated are finding stable, living wage employment opportunities when they return to the community and have very low recidivism rates.



Internal and external evaluations consistently show that the Roots of Success program leads to significant improvements in student’s material conditions, overall well-being, and access to living wage jobs and career pathways in environmental fields; and that the program inspires and empowers students to become activists and advocates who are addressing social and environmental injustices within their communities. The program’s commitment to equity is demonstrated at every level to ensure that the curriculum can be used in diverse settings and is accessible to diverse audiences.

The program is offered in Spanish, in person in a classroom setting, online and in both community and carceral settings. The curriculum design is easily navigable, utilizes accessible language, and incorporates real-life examples that resonate with participants in the population we serve across diverse lived experiences, literacy levels, and settings.

### Key Resources

- Roots of Success instructors go through a one and half day Train-the-Instructor training.
- Instructors are enrolled in the Roots of Success federal and CA state registered Apprenticeship, which provides them with on-the-job training, mentorship, and related supplemental instruction.
- Instructors teach the course using an “Instructor’s Manual”, multimedia content, and in-class activities.
- Instructors help students identify potential employment and training opportunities using the “Roots of Success Green Jobs and Career Pathways Guidebook”.
- Students work in a “Student Workbook” which includes all of the worksheets they need to go through the course.
- Each of the modules include a scaffolded job readiness exercise that helps students prepare for interviews with employers.
- Students graduate from the course with resumes, cover letters, having gone through mock interviews, and with a written plan to start a small “green” business.
- In addition to its specific focus on environmental issues and injustices, the curriculum includes modules on “Financial Literacy and Social Entrepreneurship” and on “Community Organizing and Leadership”.

To learn more about the Roots of Success program, go to [www.rootsofsuccess.org](http://www.rootsofsuccess.org) or email us at [info@rootsofsuccess.org](mailto:info@rootsofsuccess.org)