

# Leveraging GSI to Accelerate Workforce Development

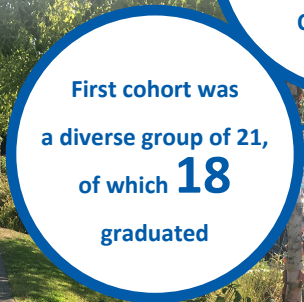
## SPU GSI Expansion Initiative

### Workforce Development Through GSI Is a Core Component of SPU's Community-Centric Mission and GSI Expansion Initiative

Achieving workforce development outcomes through Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) has been a key focus area for Seattle Public Utilities' (SPU's) GSI Expansion Initiative. GSI presents many workforce development opportunities, such as GSI construction jobs and landscape maintenance jobs. This document summarizes accomplishments to-date, currently ongoing efforts, and planned future activities around leveraging GSI to accelerate workforce development in Seattle.

The goal of SPU's GSI workforce development activities is the creation of pathways to living-wage jobs, with a particular focus on groups of people who are disproportionately impacted, such as BIPOC, youth, women, homeless, and LGBTQIA+ communities.

While GSI workforce opportunities include planning, design, construction, and operations and maintenance (O&M), SPU's current focus is on providing local residents with the skills necessary to build, operate, and maintain GSI while providing exposure to a range of utility work opportunities.



### SPU's GSI Workforce Development Story

2006  
to  
Current

#### GSI Landscape Maintenance by Seattle Conservation Corps (SCC)

SPU hired the SCC to provide landscape maintenance for SPU-owned GSI facilities. The SCC provides employment for people experiencing homelessness, providing opportunities to train and work in a structured program that provides training, job skills, and carries out projects that benefit the local community and environment.

2009  
to  
Current

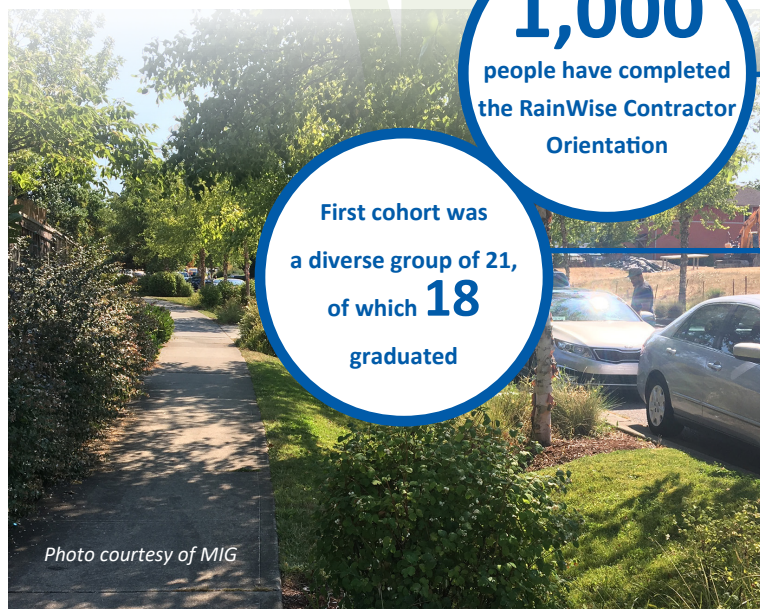
#### RainWise Contractor Orientation

Training session for contractors that enables them to work through the RainWise program.

2020  
to  
Current

#### RainWise Academy

In partnership with South Seattle College, this small business incubator trains future RainWise contractors in business and technical skills necessary to be a successful RainWise contractor.



# Innovating As We Grow

SPU's Grow Green Infrastructure efforts are continually learning and adaptively managing our approaches. Below are some key lessons learned in our efforts to support community through providing increased local workforce opportunity.



## Growing new business opportunities requires support

One barrier to expanding the GSI workforce is that starting a business is very challenging and time-intensive. In response to this, SPU incorporated business training in to the RainWise Academy in 2020.



## Workforce training is staff intensive

SPU does not have sufficient internal staff resources to address the many needs and issues associated with hiring and training a workforce program. In response to this, SPU's primary approach is to work with regional partners who's mission is focused on workforce development, and embed workforce training requirements within contract requirements.



## Traditional utility contracting approaches can be challenging for non-profit and community-based organizations

Several potential workforce development partnerships have been unsuccessful because of legal contracting or capacity issues by either party. SPU is growing our approaches for contracting that support partner's existing capabilities while meeting City contracting requirements.

## Work in Progress

SPU is in the process of partnering with the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) to develop a new program called **SPU Opportunity WorkCorps (SOWCorps)**. This program is focused on providing green jobs to opportunity youth aged 18-25, and providing them with insight into utility operations and career pathways in the GSI and landscape maintenance field.

In addition to the SOWCorps program, SPU is advancing **RainWise contractor training**, including:

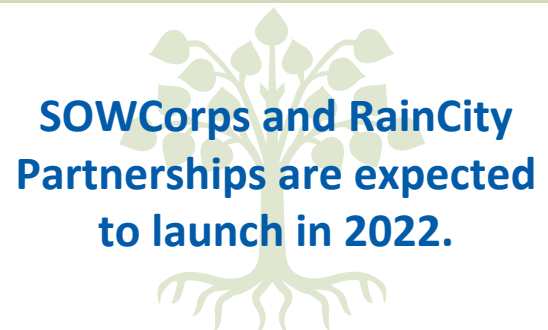
- Development of language-supported versions of RainWise contractor skill trainings and peer to peer mentoring.
- Making RainWise training materials from the RainWise Academy and RainWise Contractor Orientation available in modules, so that people can access them on their own schedule or focus on specific areas where they need support.

**RainCity Partnerships** is in development to further advance GSI workforce goals. This community-based public private partnership delivery model will bring high-performing GSI retrofit projects and riparian restoration along Seattle's creeks and rivers, and provide a pathway for training and employment during implementation. Community workforce opportunities include local hiring targets, mentoring, and internships.

## What's Next

In 2022 SPU plans on focusing workforce development efforts on:

- Leveraging connections to City of Seattle Green New Deal and COVID-19 equitable recovery efforts to provide links to careers and short term engagement efforts while establishing connections with organizations providing soft skill support.
- Supporting regional efforts for steady and equitable GSI workforce opportunities, including regional opportunities for GSI project material supply and innovation, and regional training and certification efforts.
- Explore Priority Hire requirements on smaller contracts.
- Support successful implementation of GSI workforce goals within RainWise, SOWCorps, and RainCity Partnerships.



**SOWCorps and RainCity Partnerships are expected to launch in 2022.**