

Advancing Regional Sustainability While Jump-Starting Green Careers

Executive Summary

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG), in partnership with MobilizeGreen and ICLEI USA – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), proposes an innovative, regional sustainability and workforce development initiative. Capitalizing on ICLEI and MobilizeGreen's national reach, COG anticipates that this outcome-focused initiative will be scaled nationally and replicated in other regions of the country.

Program Description. COG's environmental sustainability activities seek to spur growth of the region's economy and reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions across the region. Two recently adopted COG initiatives, *Region Forward* and the National Capital Region Climate Change Program, create an excellent framework for regional collaboration on sustainability, economic opportunities, and workforce development. COG's regional efforts will require a skilled workforce.

At the same time, minority college students currently face a 19.1 percent unemployment rate. Many of these students are unprepared for or are unaware of sustainability career options. In addition, most cannot afford to participate in unpaid career-enhancing internships. With cash-strapped budgets, several of COG's local government members also face challenges completing basic sustainability work and creating a pipeline of talented, diverse, trained workers. COG members have indicated a need for help in implementing COG's sustainability initiatives.

COG will collaborate with MobilizeGreen and ICLEI to identify, recruit, and train ten (10) motivated, diverse students/recent graduates from area colleges, universities, and community colleges for 3-month paid internships with local government members to work on meaningful sustainability projects, including developing greenhouse gas emissions inventories, climate action planning, and green purchasing policy projects. COG will provide oversight supervision of the initiative.

MobilizeGreen will deliver a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)-driven core "sustainability 101" and regional-customized training, mentorship, and professional readiness skills with post-internship career services and project evaluation. MobilizeGreen also will provide a community service event for students and partner employees during the course of the internship. ICLEI will supplement MobilizeGreen's training to provide support to ensure understanding and execution of technical process consistent with national standards. The partners also anticipate a regional roll-out event with students, thought-leaders, policy leaders, and elected officials, as well as media participation.

Impact. In addition to getting critical regional sustainability work done and providing hands-on career training and experience for students, this initiative also provides: 1) a high-visibility event for exchange between local government officials, students, Wal-Mart, and the community regarding sustainability, workforce, and economic opportunities in the region; 2) increased awareness and understanding about local government, its functions, and leadership for students; and 3) meaningful, paid learning opportunities to help build the next generation of environmental leaders and stewards in the region.

Budget. COG seeks \$150,000 in funding for program development, intern stipends, and project evaluation.