

Frontline Workers Green Training Project

November 2013



Frontline Workers

- Vital Members of Hospital Care Teams -

This report is for readers who are interested in learning more about a Seattle-based system reform-focused project that was part of a national program developed by the Healthcare Career Advancement Program (H-CAP), an organization of union and employer partners that are committed to education and training for the incumbent healthcare workforce. The Seattle project SEIU Healthcare 1199NW and employers together to reduce the hospital industry's carbon footprint, prepare workers for greening their work, and move workers into new jobs that support environmental sustainability.

Overview

Great things happen when front line workers become a more integrated part of hospital care teams and work hand in hand with labor-management to design "green" projects and take a lead in their implementation.



EVS worker, Janet Harris, prepares to clean a patient room.

The Seattle-based Frontline Workers Green Training Project is an innovative and cost-effective project which demonstrates the power of:

Labor/management partners engaging frontline workers to lead hospital environmental sustainability efforts that support the hospital's triple bottom line: People (patients, workers, the community); Planet (the environment; and Profits (costs).

The two year funding for this project came initially in 2010 from an Energy Training Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). It was piloted by H-CAP in four regions across the U.S. with 11 employers and 4 Service Employee International Union (SEIU) locals.

H-CAP, brought together a number of partnering organizations who worked to build a program that integrated education and training with labor/management and systems change work. With input from all stakeholders H-CAP developed a core curriculum and instructional methodology for Green training that was implemented across the partnership. The New York-based Labor-Management Initiative provided training and support for participating labor/management collaborations across the country. North Seattle Community College (NSCC) in collaboration with H-CAP developed a college level course titled “Sustainability in Healthcare”, which was also implemented in the four regions with other labor/management partners.

Practice Green Health, a national organization that supports environmental sustainability in healthcare provided leadership in best practices in greening healthcare and subject matter expertise on the science and practice of sustainability in healthcare.

The SEIU Education and Support Fund took the lead on integrating worker health and safety issues into the curricula, and was a consultant for the train the trainer model used across the regions. Through this model, Worker/Supervisor teams build the skill and knowledge to deliver green training modules to their colleagues. The techniques they learned are designed to inspire and recognize the vital role that frontline workers who may be learning English and/or have low literacy skills play in ensuring a high quality healthcare system.

The Seattle area pilot project started at two local healthcare facilities – Swedish Medical Center and Northwest Hospital & Medical Center. Additional funding, from a Washington State HEET grant expanded the scope of the project into additional departments and cover additional



EVS worker, Mark Brumfield, transports waste to the waste collection area.

workers in the college level program, particularly at the University of Washington, Northwest Hospital & Medical Center. Throughout the project the Seattle partnership had access to the H-CAP national Coordinating Committee and its participating organizations.

The project's collective efforts have contributed to patient health and safety, worker health, hospital savings, and benefits to the environment.

Though the grant funding ended in June 2012, the system reforms catalyzed by the grant(s) remain in place.

In Seattle, the legacy of this work includes:

- (1) access to high quality curricula, and certificates that meet college and industry standards, resulting in the enhanced skills of over 97% of the 300 Environmental Service and Food and Nutrition workers who participated in green training, most of whom were low income, including many immigrants;
- (2) the continued engagement of frontline workers on the Labor/Management Team (LMT), recognizing that system reforms catalyzed or led by front line workers, are most successful when supported fully by all departments, worker, staff and management levels;
- (3) improved recycling, chemical, lighting energy use practices, products and measurement tools, associated with impressive cost savings, health and environmental benefits;
- (4) the creation and institutionalization of Green Coordinator/Trainer positions, ensuring that ongoing efforts to champion new green



EVS worker, Guadalupe Gonzalez, makes the rounds with her cleaning cart.

projects, advocate and inform hospital staff about green practices, training and resources will be woven into Environmental Services Housekeeping Positions; and

- (5) labor/management team recognition that the Frontline Green Careers strategies are vehicles for promoting equity and expanding the horizons and reach of frontline workers, contributing to their role as “360” green change agents at their workplace, home and all life spheres.

For many Frontline workers this project was a life-changing experience – helping them see the essential role they play in the hospital’s ecosystem, as vital partners in supporting patient care and health.



Project Aims

Concerns about the environment loom large in our communities,

EVS worker, Green Coordinator Deeanna Swenson, demonstrates the use of the ATP to fellow EVS worker, Saras Chetty.

as does an awareness that all industries contribute to waste and pollution. Hospitals are no exception, and are high intensity users of water, energy and toxic materials, generating tons of waste each year.

Project aims include a healthier planet, a healthier community, including patients, and workers and a healthier bottom line for hospital employers.

Against this backdrop the Healthcare industry is uniquely challenged, and has a double-charge – to address the health issues related to the

environment, and to remedy their unintended, yet significant contributions to these problems.

Despite these daunting challenges the Frontline Workers Green Training Project showed that bold, practical and potentially replicable investments in system-reform focused green projects can make a difference in healthcare settings.

At the heart of this project is the belief that when hospital workers are empowered through education and training, and close partnerships with labor and management are established, the benefits to all engaged will be exponential and experienced at their workplace, home, community, and beyond.

Core Strategies

Interest from healthcare, education and workforce development partners in the Frontline Green Careers project has been high.

Core strategies that need to be in place to launch a successful project include:

- (1) The formation of a “green team” comprised of representation from hospital departments including department leadership, union leadership, front line workers and front line managers, including but not limited to those who are implementing green system change projects;
- (2) Sponsors from both the operational leadership of the hospital and the union approve and support green systems change goals;
- (3) The selection and implementation of the labor/management partnership-prioritized green projects, in areas such as waste reduction, energy consumption and water conservation;
- (4) The establishment of detailed green project work plans and timelines, which include SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, repeatable and time-bound) goals and outcomes that can be effectively measured and compared to local and national measures.

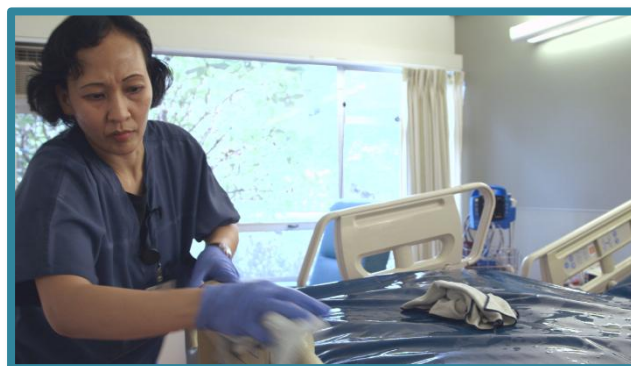


FNS worker, Elmer Oriondo, sorts food and 'garbage' waste.

- (5) The development of credit-bearing college certificate courses that provide frontline workers with the essential green sustainability skills to: (a) lead, support, and assess the effectiveness of “green strategies”; (b) communicate to hospital peers, staff and governance committees the reasons and ways to support these interventions; and (c) pursue next steps education and/or careers that capitalize on this knowledge;
- (6) Communication about the ongoing status of green strategies throughout the healthcare facility including hospital leadership at both operational and departmental levels, the workforce, commissions, educational and workforce development partners, funders and potential investment, expansion or replication partners;
- (7) Ongoing marketing of the results of green projects, underscoring their capacity to respond to hospital environmental and institutional priorities, improve patient health, reduce hospital costs and contribute to the overall greening of the planet.
- (8) The development of an internal and sustainable infrastructure including but not limited to a green team and front line worker trainers who are able to continue training workers and managers along with a new position to ensure that new projects are developed to support environmental sustainability and old ones are maintained.

People, Planet and Profit Results

The project results have been positive, making a strong case for their growth and scalability within a hospital or to additional healthcare settings. Healthcare institutions across the nation may benefit from implementing such projects.



EVS worker, Janet Harris, sanitizes and disinfects a bed in a patient room.

To date, the results of the project have been impressive. The project has:

- Been a stepping stone to next step career college courses for incumbent workers;
- Helped frontline workers understand and value the tremendous life-saving impacts that their work has on patient and worker health and safety;
- Created a more robust hospital-based care team, capitalizing fully on the vital role that front line workers play on this team;
- Showcased the importance of green projects as an efficient and cost-effective way to promote health care people, profit and planet goal setting;
- Contributed to a positive and productive cross-department communication system among workers and management;
- Served as a career ladder opportunity for frontline workers to be promoted as key agents of change around sustainability work; and
- Underscored the enormous impact that an LMT which embraces and cultivates the skills of incumbent workers can have in a hospital environment.



FNS worker, Ok Soon Petzold, puts clean dishes back on the rack.

A brief description of examples of green project goals to have less toxic cleaners, improve composting and increase recycling, reduce the carbon footprint and maintain a clean and healthy patient environment is described below.

SMART Goal 1

The LMT developed a SMART goal to move from Northwest Hospital's current chemicals to green chemicals, focusing on the six (6) chemicals most routinely used by housekeepers.

Smart Goal 1 Results: People and planet results, as documented on LMT Surveys of end users and clinical staff revealed that the new chemicals were well-received, met strict efficacy and environmental criteria. Profit results showed that the hospital reduced the cost of chemicals by \$4,000. Extra steps taken to measure the environmental benefits of the chemicals included utilizing third party certification agencies to ensure that the products were sustainable.

SMART Goal 2

The Food and Nutrition Services Department at Northwest Hospital selected a composting project to capture compostable food waste that otherwise would have been thrown in the trash.

Smart Goal 2 Results: The FNS piloted a three stream sort station, and posted signage created by the Northwest Hospital Marketing Department and Signage committees to provide visual cues for the public to use to separate compostable waste. FNS also diverted compostable materials generated during food preparation. A review of these efforts included measuring the amount of food waste diverted from the landfill to a composting facility, and the

Dynamic, interactive, applied curricula appealed to diverse incumbent workforce

The incumbent worker green training curricula was designed to meet the needs of a linguistically and culturally diverse workforce. Core topics included: "Talking Green" and "Seeing Green"; Water and Energy Conservation; Reduction of Waste and Reduction of Hospital Acquired Infections.

Seventy-nine percent of the 300 workers were persons of color. Only one quarter were born in the United States. Their countries of origin included: the Philippines, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Peru, Cambodia, China, Mexico, Nicaragua, Greece, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Costa Rica and Somalia.

The interactive, applied learning approach of the curricula was effective, and appealed to persons from different educational backgrounds. The curricula incorporated complex scientific data and made it exciting, relevant and accessible to all workers. The curricula were designed to provide incumbent workers with fundamental information connected to their green projects.



FNS workers, Ok Soon Petzold and Elnie Lee, prepare food for patients.

number of pounds of recyclable materials diverted from the landfill to a recycling facility. The planet and people focused results were significant. Waste and recyclable materials diversions that occurred as a result of this project were analyzed in terms of likely effects on greenhouse gas equivalents, which were projected to experience a reduction of (-478,962) metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents – potentially reducing negative impacts on human health.

SMART Goal 3

The Facilities Department replaced the lighting in the parking garage with a greener choice, expecting that this activity might result in lower energy and labor costs, increased safety for patients and staff and clarified surveillance video.

Smart Goal 3 Results:

The people results included greater security and comfort coming in and out of the hospital parking garage. The planet results revealed that the new bulbs lasted longer, burned brighter, reduced the amount of hazardous waste disposed of by the hospital, and shrunk the hospital carbon footprint. The profit results showed that the brighter, longer lasting bulbs would not have to be changed as often, reducing labor and bulb replacement costs. The new lighting was determined to save the hospital over \$9,129.00 saving over 121,414 kWh per year; equivalent to providing the power for 14 average family homes. The research also demonstrated that saving 121,414 Kilowatt-hours of electricity is equal to the annual greenhouse gas emissions from 16.4 passenger vehicles.

SMART Goal 4

The Lead Housekeeper worked with other green team members to set a goal to use Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) metering to measure quality assurance. Goals included: reducing hospital acquired infections (HAIs) by maintaining a clean



EVS worker, Guadalupe Gonzalez, makes a bed in a patient room.

patient environment, and educating Environmental Services workers about the importance of their frontline defense role of preventing HAIs.

Smart Goal 4 Results:

Pre/Post data showed that the hospital rooms were cleaner and HAIs were lower. The assessed annual costs to implementing the project were modest. Participation in this project demonstrated first hand to workers the direct connection between their work and potential disease prevention.

Next Steps

The initial results of the Greening Healthcare project are significant. This project demonstrates the intersection of workforce development and the greening of healthcare, underscoring how relatively modest but deliberate investments in frontline workers green training make a tremendous difference on the triple bottom line: people, profit and planet.

All stakeholders will continue to engage in efforts to communicate, and further demonstrate the capacity of this model to:

- Build and utilize the expertise of frontline workers to drive and participate in labor management collaborative strategies and be environmental stewards - in all spheres of their lives.
- Be vital care team partners - responding to patient health and satisfaction;
- Contribute to hospital cost savings and carbon footprint reduction;
- Promote worker environmental sustainability skills in areas such as water use, energy and waste reduction, knowledge of the effects of



FNS workers prepare food for patients.

using toxic chemicals and communication skills – paving the way for next steps education or jobs that further cultivate these skills;

- Contribute to hospital worker, family, staff and overall community health;
- Improve labor/management and worker communication within and across job titles, departments and management levels; leading to more effective means of information sharing, priority-setting and skill-building;
- Ensure the continuation of frontline worker-driven green healthcare practices through the institutionalization of a peer training model, funding of Green Coordinator/Trainers, and continued pursuit of green practices and projects which promote the capacity of hospital employees to be responsible stewards of the environment, and contributors to healthcare-connected people, planet and profit goals;
- Support frontline workers in their efforts to be agents of change;
- Develop a communication plan and dissemination tool box to share examples of curricula and green team materials and methodologies for determining results with others interested in adapting or replicating this work; and
- Seek funding to examine the longer term effects of interventions (such as the ATP meter cleaning on patient health), by approaching entities, such as government agencies and foundations for funds to conduct this work.



FNS worker, Anthony Recassner, weighs protein for patient meal serving size accuracy.

The benefits of building on the Frontline Workers Green Project work and embarking on new green strategies which harness and support the leadership of frontline workers are essentially limitless. Initial results present a compelling case for reinvesting a small portion of the profits generated from these strategies to sustain and grow them.

The words of frontline workers send a clear message:

'We are saving a lot of money'

'I feel more confident and happy because I am doing something good.'

'This is a program we need.'

'We got to keep it.'

For More Information

A video about this project can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAUsrmlHB4s&feature=youtu.be>

For more information, please contact:

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