



GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

- Hands-on training for GSI careers
- Sustainable impact on water and communities
- Wraparound support for career success

WHEREVER THEY START, WHATEVER THEIR PATH, WE ARE COMMITTED

PROGRAM SUMMARY



The **Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)** Program, also known as the **Tacoma Green Opportunity Corp (GRO)**, prepares young adults in Pierce County for stable, long-term careers in climate-resilient infrastructure and environmental stewardship. The program responds to two urgent regional needs: growing demand for a skilled workforce to maintain green stormwater systems and the need for equitable access to living-wage career pathways for young adults who have been historically excluded from these opportunities.

In partnership with the Nature Conservancy, City of Tacoma, and the Pierce Conservation District this program combines paid training, industry-aligned curriculum, and hands-on field experience to equip participants with practical skills applicable to careers in stormwater management, landscape maintenance, environmental services, and public works. Training emphasizes real-world application through classroom instruction paired with field-based learning, allowing participants to gain experience installing, maintaining, and understanding green infrastructure systems such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable surfaces.

Delivered across three cohorts between 2024 and 2025, the program supports participants from recruitment and enrollment through training completion and post-training follow-up. In addition to technical skill development, participants receive career navigation support focused on employment readiness, job placement, and next-step planning within the regional environmental and infrastructure workforce.

GSI demonstrates how workforce development and environmental investment can work together to create meaningful career opportunities while supporting long-term regional infrastructure goals.

KEY ACTIVITIES

↗ Spring 2024

- Planning and Curriculum Development
- Establish training goals and recruitment process
- Provide input on GSI curriculum

↗ Fall 2024

- Cohort 1 Training Delivery
- October - December 2024
- Enrollment, classroom instruction, and field-based learning

↗ Winter 2025

- Cohort 1 Post-Training Support
- Follow-up conversations and documentation with trainees

↗ Spring 2025

- Cohort 2 Training Delivery
- March – May 2025
- Enrollment, classroom instruction, and field-based learning

↗ Fall 2025

- Cohort 3 Training Delivery
- September–November 2025
- Final cohort enrollment, training, and field learning
- Post-training support for Cohorts 2 and 3
- Final evaluation and reporting

↗ Contract Close Out

- By January 2026
- Final report submitted
- Contract fully completed



PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

A synthesis of insights gathered from scholar or stakeholder focus groups

GENERAL THEMES & TRENDS

- The program exceeded 100% of the participants expectations
- 100% of participants would recommend this program
- 100% of participants rated the supportive services as excellent
- 100% rated the professional development as good or excellent
- 100% rated the certifications they received as excellent
- 100% of participants rated the knowledge and skills they gained from the GSI as excellent or good.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- More snacks
- More hands-on experiences during field trips
- Raise the stipend to \$1,500
- Allow people to join the program after the first week

DIRECT QUOTES

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Remain open minded, remain reachable, remain humble. Every opportunity you get to learn, get educated, and become more knowledgeable, take it! It's a real privilege. And not only that, it'll never hurt to take some time to learn something new. Especially if it's for free.

- *Anonymous*

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY



The focus group's main aim was to assess GSI's impact on students and to identify strengths and areas for improvement within the program. The session included a welcome, introductions, a scholar discussion, a resume-building activity, and a closing survey. The purpose of the resume-building activity essentially gauged what skills were used post-graduation in terms of both technical and soft skills. Results of this activity showed evidence that GSI curriculum is both relevant and useful to GSI students' paths after program completion.

Six students participated in the evaluation, representing all three cohorts. Five students participated in the group focus session, and one student participated through an individual interview.

Participants highlighted several key themes, most of which involved an overall sense of increased access to resources and opportunities for students. Also, the program offered a lot of insight into a variety of career fields under the GSI umbrella. One of our alum, M. Witschger, said "The job opportunities, opportunities to interact with people, to socialize, connect, and obviously all of the opportunities that come after".

Strengths of the program included: its ability to bring students together with shared interests, engage students with relevant curriculum, facilitate networking, provide individualized support, and offer access to essential resources. Participants also identified challenges such as communication issues, difficulty gathering contact information from networking opportunities, transportation barriers, and mental health concerns.

Recommendations for improvement included: extending the program's duration, offering more hands-on employment support, increasing emphasis on resume-building and interview skills, organizing field trips to job fairs, and creating opportunities for alumni engagement. Overall, participants described the program as a supportive, low-pressure environment that helped build confidence and professional skills.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES



31 Scholars

COHORT 1

100% 10/10 completion rate

Flagger: Five students successfully completed it.

Conversion rate: 10/19 - 52.6%

Placement rate: 9/10

COHORT 2

71% 5/7 completion rate

Flagger: Four out of five students successfully completed it.

GED: 1/1

Conversion rate: 10/19 - 52.6%

Placement rate: 9/10

COHORT 3

66.7% 10/15 completion rate

Flagger: Five out of five students who opted in, successfully completed it.

Conversion rate: 15/21 - 71.4%

Placement rate: Currently in the process of gathering wage information.



CHALLENGES

- **Staffing and organizational changes:**
 - Addressed through interim coverage and revised roles.
- **Recruitment and retention barriers:**
 - Mitigated through targeted outreach and adjusted engagement strategies.
- **Scheduling, facilities, and equipment constraints:**
 - Managed through flexible scheduling and resource optimization.
- **External factors (economic conditions, weather, policy changes):**
 - Monitored and incorporated into program planning.
- **Corrective actions taken:**
 - Implemented to stabilize operations and maintain program delivery.
- **Remaining risks:**
 - Identified and integrated into ongoing planning and evaluation efforts.



Bridget B.

"I'm currently working for the City of Tacoma in the Environmental Services Department for Environmental Compliance. I'm a permit manager for industrial wastewater at the sewer treatment plant. I permit the big industries, especially around the port, and I make sure that the water they're discharging into our plant is within specific limits that they're allowed to have. I also do source control, so I'm checking for spills. There's a spill hotline, and if people complain, I'm going out in the field, I'm opening up the maintenance holes, I'm looking inside, and I'm tracing where things end up downstream, and then I'm helping clean it up."



Jamara M.

"This program taught me confidence - to step up, learn new skills, and see how I can make a difference in my community. I'm truly grateful for this opportunity, for the mentors who guided me, and for everyone who shared this experience with me."



Matthew W.

"I'm really thankful to the Palmer coordinators for all they have done and continue doing to educate and support me, and I'm looking forward to being able to be a part of the change for a greener Tacoma."



Ta'Kara T.

"I have truly enjoyed the GSI program. The opportunity to learn about an entirely new line of work, that prioritizes environmental health, has been more than cool. It's made me more considerate, cautious, and passionate in many other ways. I'm inspired to take all the new skills, knowledge, and creativity I've acquired into the next chapter of my life."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate additional occupational certifications to strengthen scholar readiness and workforce competitiveness.
- Expand experiential learning through job shadowing and ride-along opportunities with local employers.
- Strengthen employer partnerships across Pierce County to align training with workforce demand and increase employment pathways.
- Explore expansion into a formal pre-apprenticeship model or embedded public works training.
- Secure sustained funding to support program growth, staffing capacity, and long-term success.



CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

We certify that this report is accurate and complete and that all deliverables, milestones, and program requirements for the Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Program have been fulfilled in accordance with funding and reporting guidelines.

Authorized Representative:

Name: Brooke Summerlin

Title: Director of Enrollment and Placement

Organization: Palmer Scholars

Signature: *Brooke Summerlin*
Date 12/17/2025



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It's really cool that the topics we learn about become things that you start to see in your everyday life, and they become tangible issues. You become aware of them.

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Matthew