



HENNEPIN COUNTY  
MINNESOTA



# Green Pathways pilot overview 2022

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# Environment and Energy Green Pathways pilot

- **2018 Research finding:** Internships for high school students in the EE department are limited.
- **Recommendation:** Create a summer job shadowing program within our department for high school students
- **Goals:**
  - Recruit BIPOC youth to consider environmental careers
  - Expand paid environmental internship opportunities for diverse youth in Hennepin County
  - Create a supportive cohort and a meaningful job training experience that develops life and leadership skills including updated resumes
  - Create a connection and potential job pathway into the environmental field and the Environment and Energy department
  - Directly connect youth to nature experiences



## Program overview: EE Green Pathways

Interns will rotate throughout department units  
and be mentored by staff.

They will learn about different careers and  
necessary experiences in environmental fields.

Interns will spend ~3-4 days with each unit

3 high school interns

June-August employment, 32 hours a week, 9  
weeks

1 college student (Urban Scholar)

May-August employment, 40 hours a week,  
12 weeks



# Week 1: Administrative



# Week 2: Waste Reduction and Recycling Part 1



# Week 3: Waste Reduction and Recycling Part 2



# Week 4: Forestry





# Week 5: Land & Water, Natural Resources



# Week 6: Brownfields and Contaminated Lands



# Week 7: Environmental Education & Outreach



# Week 8: HERC & BPTS



# Goal-based evaluation

- Recruit BIPOC youth to consider environmental careers
- Expand paid environmental internship opportunities for diverse youth in Hennepin County
- Create a supportive cohort and a meaningful job training experience that develops life and leadership skills including updated resumes
- Create a connection and potential job pathway into the environmental field and the Environment and Energy department
- Directly connect youth to nature experiences

# Recruit BIPOC youth to consider environmental careers

- Interns became familiar with a range of career paths
  - Administrative work: Front desk work, how to lead a department, budgeting work, secretarial work, legislative and legal work, grant approval
  - Solid waste management: Multi-family recycling and organics coordination, business inspections, school collaboration
  - Communications work: Outreach, educating the public, behavior changing strategies social media content creation, document design
  - In-the-field work: Hazardous waste inspections, tree planting and maintenance, urban tree planning, water and habitat biomonitoring

# Expand paid environmental internship opportunities for diverse youth in the County

- County partnered with BrookLynk and Urban Scholars
  - Urban Scholars: An internship recruitment and professional development program for college attending, primarily POC, students
  - BrookLynk: An internship recruitment and professional development program for high school, primarily POC students
- Another good program to partner with would be STEP-UP

# Create a supportive cohort and a meaningful job training experience that develops life and leadership skills including updated resumes

- Having a cohort allowed interns to receive support from each other and have peers
- Many resume points were added to each intern's resume
  - Environmental field work and community outreach:
    - Conduct community outreach about recycling at National Night Out event
  - Administrative tasks:
    - Survey solid waste haulers to create a waste-facility report
    - Create content for Hennepin Environment Instagram account





# Create a connection and potential job pathway into the environmental field and the Environment and Energy department

- Interns each had a mentor throughout the program
- Interns worked with so many different Environment and Energy staff throughout the summer and made connections with them

# Directly connect youth to nature experiences

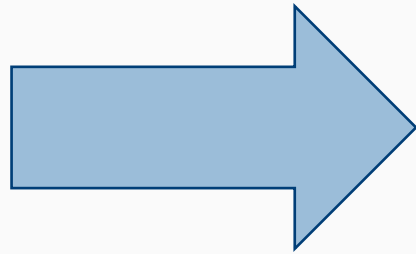
- Interns had many opportunities to connect with nature
  - Planting trees from a tree bed nursery
  - Hiking in a forest
  - Collecting water samples from a lake
  - Seeing a beehive up close while wearing bee suits
  - Kayaking



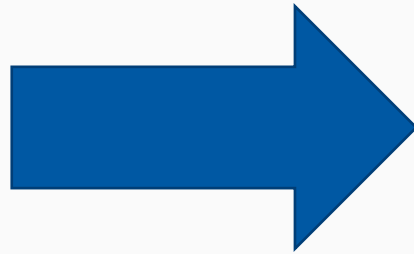
# Reflections from intern feedback

- There was significant growth in Microsoft Office proficiency
- Interns became more confident in topics related to environmental work
- There was no difference in interest levels for the environmental field
  - The program may be more impactful on high school students who are a bit younger or students who are already interested in pursuing an environmental career

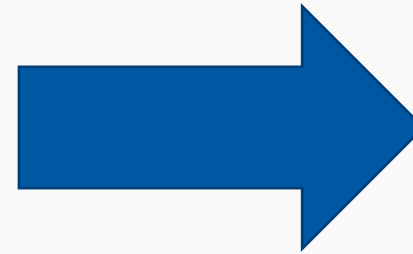
# Next steps



Summer  
internship



Pathways

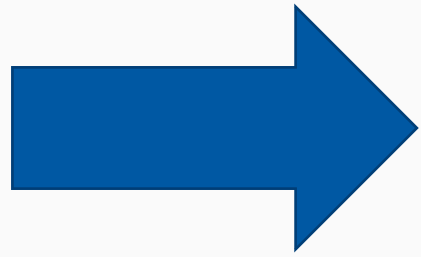


Recruitment  
Year 2



# Pathways

- Green Pathways PLUS
- Future job opportunities / seasonal work
- Ongoing networking



# Recruitment

- REIT (Racial Equity Impact Tool)
- BrookLynk, Step Up, Urban Scholars
- Job posting via typical recruitment

# Metrics: What does success look like?

- Goal-based evaluation
- Pre- and post-internship surveys
- Tracking career paths of former interns
- Demographic data

# Questions?

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# Survey findings on green jobs for youth

September 2022

# Youth green jobs surveys

- Environmental education network
  - 25 responses: nonprofit organizations, schools, park and watershed districts
  - 8 currently have youth green jobs programs, 17 do not
- Youth
  - 67 people under 26 years old
  - 79 responses total

# What age groups should we focus on?

## Primarily high school and young adult

(EE Network survey)

● Middle school (ages 12 – 14)	11
● High school (ages 15 – 18)	21
● Young adult (ages 19-26)	13
● Other	5



# How many youth do programs hire

- Varies
  - Some hire 3 to 5
  - Others up to 25 to 30
- Programs may be kept intentionally small to maximize benefits

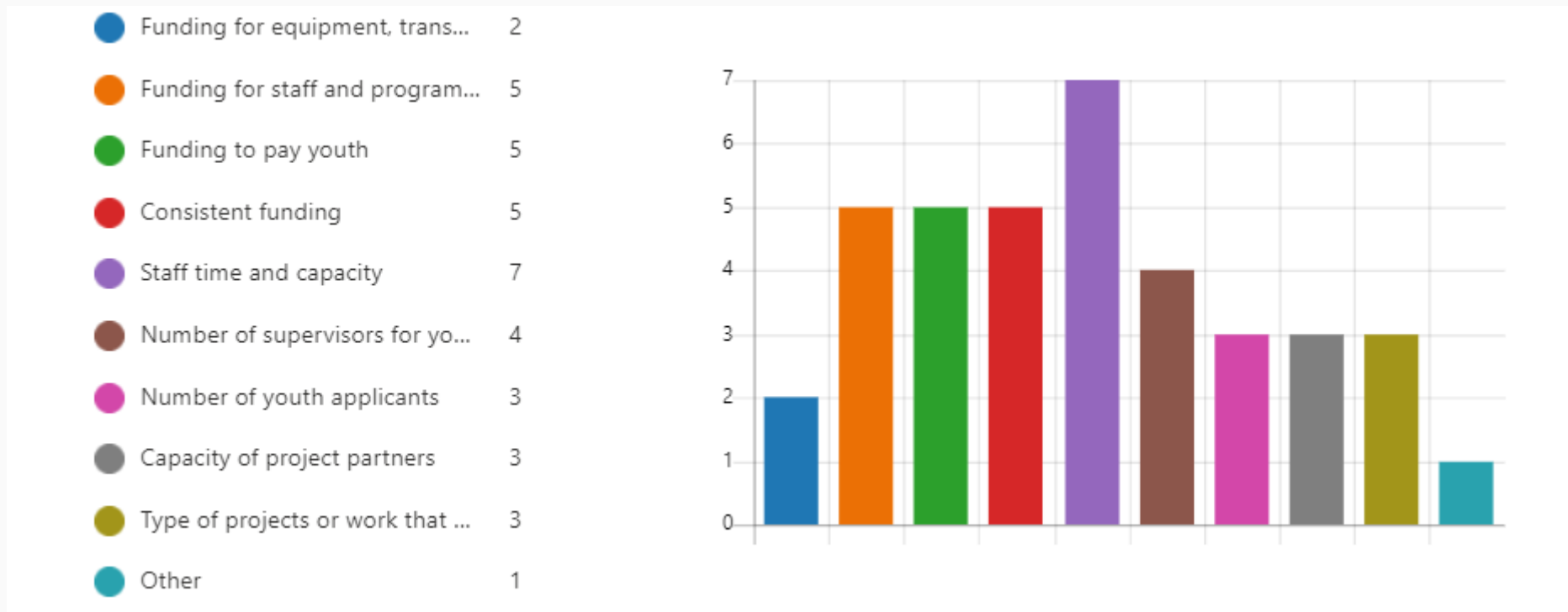
(EE Network survey)



# Factors impacting ability to hire more youth

Staff capacity was the most important factor, with other factors related to funding being second most common

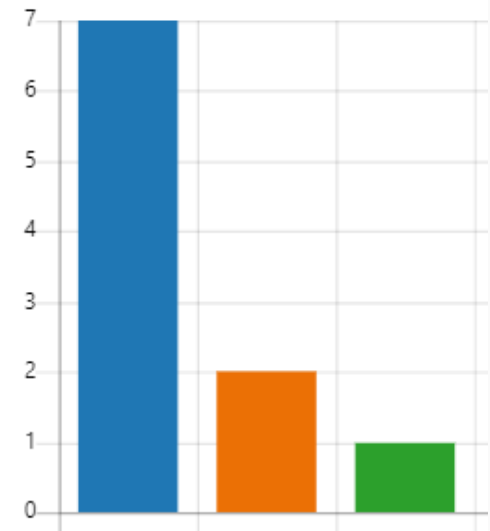
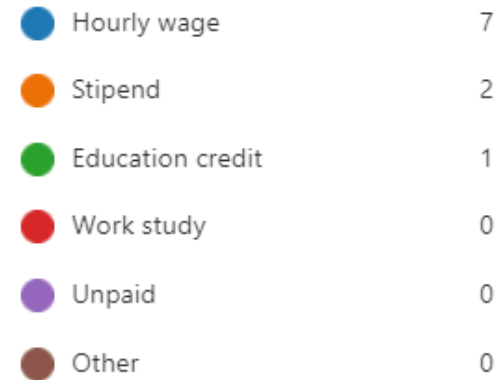
(EE Network survey)



# Youth compensation

- Most programs provide youth an hourly wage
  - Wages varied from \$10 to \$20, with average of \$15.50
- Respondents felt paying youth was critical
  - Supports underserved youth
  - Shows youth that their time and work is valued
  - Helps youth understand that these fields provide meaningful work and viable careers

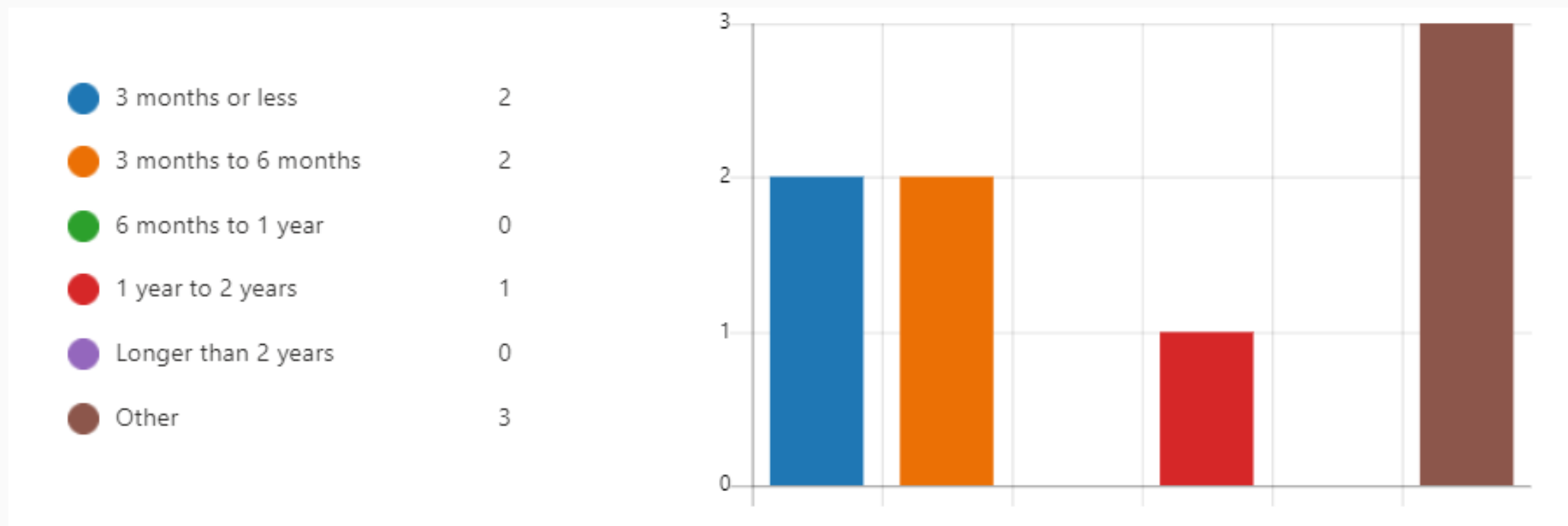
(EE Network survey)



# Length of youth employment term

Length of employment varies, from less than 3 months to over 1 year

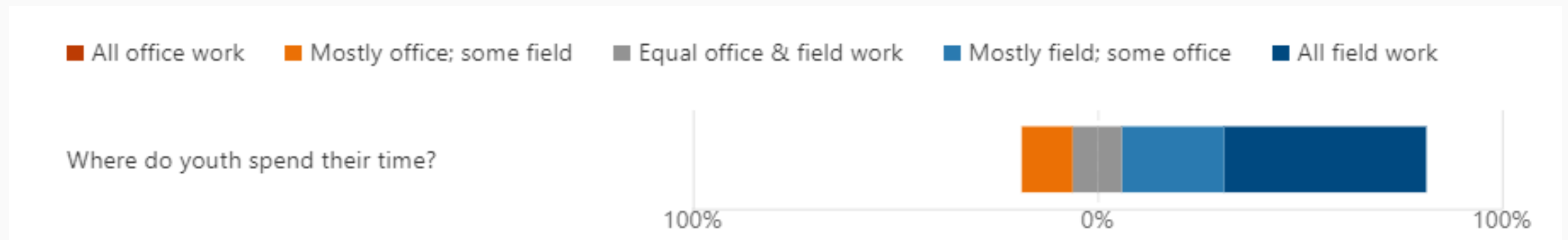
(EE Network survey)



# Balance of office and field work

Most programs are all or mostly field work, with fewer programs being equal or more office work

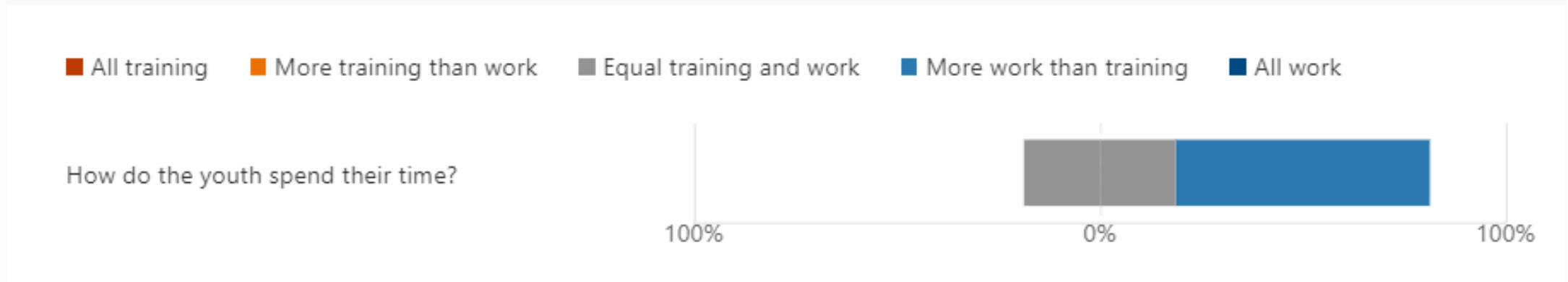
(EE Network survey)





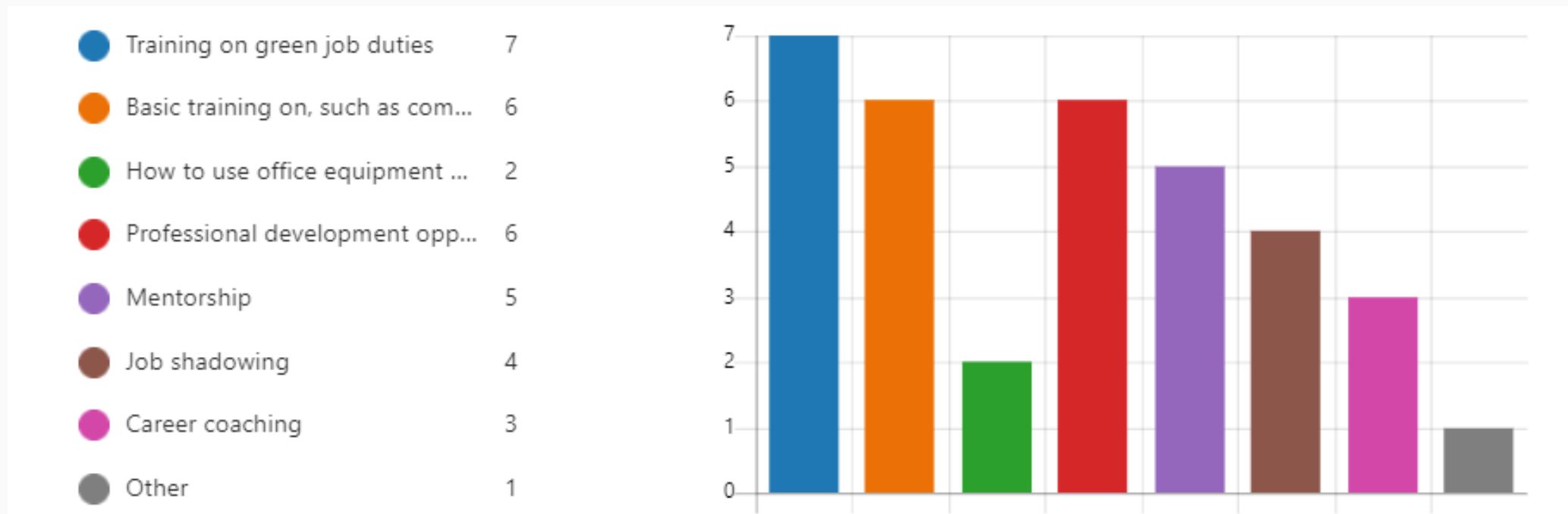
# Balance of work and training/professional development

Most programs offer a balance of work and training, with some being equal and some being more work than training  
(EE Network survey)



# Type of training

Youth receive a variety of training, most commonly on their job duties, professional development in the environmental field, and with mentors (EE Network survey)



# Youth barriers to green jobs

- Experience
  - Lack college degree or previous work experience
  - Difficult to find and get entry level positions
- Availability
  - Unsure how to find them
  - Lack of availability of green jobs
  - Competitive and hard to get

(Youth survey)

Hennepin County



# Where do youth look for jobs?

- Student-focused resources
  - School job boards
  - Americorps and other entry-level programs
- Nonprofit and professional networks
- Government sites
- General internet job sites
  - Google, LinkedIn, Indeed



# Youth barriers to green jobs

- Pay
  - Jobs don't pay well enough
  - Unsure if green jobs would pay well enough
- Interviewing
- Work load and schedule
- Age

(Youth survey)



# Important aspects of our green jobs program

- Need to increase availability of jobs
- Need to provide mentors
- Make sure the job is interesting and useful
- Pay a living wage
- Center diversity, equity, and inclusion

(Youth survey)



# What green jobs are youth interested in?

## More interest

- Energy and **Natural resources** 80%
- Environmental **justice** and health 76%
- **Transportation** and Waste prevention 76%
- Waste management 70%

## Less interest

- Agriculture and food 68%
- Environmental education 65%
- Environmental advocacy 64%
- Recreation 63%

(Youth survey)



# What youth liked most about past jobs

- Working on real-world issues that have an impact
- Having a supportive and collaborative work environment and mentors
- Ability to grow, develop skills, take the lead
- Being outside, getting paid, having meals provided

(Youth survey)





# Why youth are interested in green jobs

- Care about the environment and nature
- Feel responsibility to combat climate change, eco-anxiety, threat of societal collapse
- Want to be part of the solution and give back to land and community
- Interested in working on issues and with communities most burdened by pollution
- Are passionate about teaching about the environment

(Youth survey)

Hennepin County



# Role of schools

## Ideas from EE Network survey

- Offer green jobs internships during school day
- Integrate learning about green jobs and the environment into school curriculum to give youth enough experience to get a green job
- Schools may have a hard time prioritizing green job programs, even with grant funding

## Ideas from youth survey

- Embed into school curriculum
- Work with and support teachers
- Advertise to high schoolers



# Next steps

- Now: Researching the programs suggested by those who responded to the surveys
- Future: Develop programming to provide funds to organizations that provide green job training to youth, with a focus on youth that experience racial and other disparities

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