

OPORTUNIDADES EN EL BOSQUE

OVERVIEW

Oportunidades en el Bosque (*Opportunities in the Woods* in English) is a workforce development and entrepreneurship training course offered in Spanish that paves the way for forest workers and their communities in southern Oregon and the Pacific Northwest to become more invested in and prosper equitably from Oregon's forest economy. The forestry curriculum is currently being developed between [Lomakatsi Restoration Project](#), [Oregon State University Extension](#), and [Rural Development Initiatives](#) and will be piloted in Talent, OR in February 2024.

This project builds upon work and research conducted by Lomakatsi, OSU Extension, and RDI, through which a focus group, interviews, and community outreach were conducted in Oregon's Jackson and Josephine Counties to assess the needs of Latinx entrepreneurs. These activities confirmed that there is substantial state and federal funding for ecosystem restoration, wildfire mitigation, and related forestry work, but that many barriers hinder Latinx community members from participating in these opportunities as entrepreneurs. Our curriculum is designed to support participants to identify the most viable pathways with the fewest barriers for their situation, and includes support for the specific barriers faced by each participant.

OBJECTIVES

These trainings aim to increase equitable employment and entrepreneurial capacity in southern Oregon's forest economy by implementing a culturally appropriate, useful education program that exposes Latinx forest workers in Jackson County to opportunities within the forestry services industry, and provides specialized training for those opportunities. This pilot will provide a 3-session training and 1-on-1 technical assistance to approx. 10 forest workers in two cohorts (20 participants total), and connect them to local resources, organizations, and peer networks that support business development.

We define success as participants who can make informed choices about starting a new business; are able to access resources needed to start a business; and form a business that captures forestry services contracts and fosters safe, equitable working conditions for all employees. The entrepreneurial activity this project aims to create would not only bring economic prosperity to underserved Latinx communities, but also contribute to long-term forest health and reduction of wildfire risk. The evaluation of this pilot will serve to create a template for future programming that can be implemented in other communities that may benefit from this kind of training.

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