



Green Jobs 101

What is a green job?

Green jobs are living-wage, career-track jobs that contribute to preserving or enhancing environmental quality. They have some important characteristics:

Green jobs are today's jobs repurposed and expanded in a low-carbon economy.

Diverse localities across the United States are already using green development strategies to make impressive strides in job creation, workforce development, and environmental stewardship. What's more, the vast majority of jobs associated with the clean energy transition are in occupations that people already work in today, in every state and region of the country. For example, constructing wind farms creates jobs for sheet metal workers, machinists, industrial truck drivers, and engineers. Energy efficiency retrofits for buildings employ roofers, insulators, carpenters, building inspectors, and accountants. Expanding mass transit systems employs metal fabricators, electricians, dispatchers, and customer service representatives.

Clean energy creates more jobs than fossil fuels.

Renewable energy and efficiency improvements create twice as many jobs per unit of energy and per dollar invested than traditional fossil fuel-based generating technologies by redirecting money previously spent on wasted energy, pollution, and imported fuel toward advanced technology, modern infrastructure, and skilled labor.

Green jobs are local and difficult to outsource.

Reducing our dependence on imported and carbon-based energy sources will be a labor-intensive enterprise. Greening our economy involves transforming the places that we live and work, and the ways we get around. These jobs are impossible to offshore. Making buildings more energy efficient, constructing mass transit lines, installing solar panels and wind turbines, expanding public green space, growing and refining biofuels—all this work must take place right here in America, in both urban and rural areas. Moreover, deploying clean technologies and improving the efficiency of our energy infrastructure are local investments with a high level of domestic sourcing and large multiplier effect.

Green jobs are good, career-ladder jobs.

The transformation of our antiquated energy infrastructure can be the great engine for American innovation, productivity growth, and job creation in the coming decades. Green jobs will continue to expand exponentially if we make smart investments now. Importantly, green jobs pay family-supporting wages and provide opportunities for advancement along a career track. Green jobs encompass a wide breadth of skill sets, but most are middle-skill jobs accessible to all Americans given access to effective training and appropriate supports.

What can the federal government do to promote green jobs?

CAP recently conducted a study with the University of Massachusetts Political Economy Research Institute, which determined that an immediate federal investment of \$100 billion in energy efficiency and renewable technology could create 2 million jobs—nearly four times as many jobs as spending the same amount within the oil industry. Plus, these investments leverage the added benefits of improving the energy efficiency and environmental quality of our homes, cities, and rural communities, as well as creating new products for export.

Focused public investment in green infrastructure and efficiency can drive immediate spending into some of the hardest hit sectors of the economy, such as construction and manufacturing, and ensure that this infusion flows directly into job creation and domestic goods and services. Investing in a green economy will allow us to lay the groundwork for future prosperity and innovation by creating millions of new, well-paying green jobs, rather than devoting our resources to an old and unsustainable model based on the consumption of imported oil and polluting fossil fuels.

The Center for American Progress has identified stabilization, stimulus, recovery, and growth as the four steps needed to achieve long-term economic health. Each of these steps is an opportunity for smart public policy and investment decisions by the federal government to create new markets, industries, and green jobs in clean energy and energy efficiency. Higher levels of public investment will promote private sector productivity and higher rates of return for business.

Elected officials in Washington are preparing an immediate response to our unemployment, energy, and environmental challenges in the form of an economic stimulus plan that would marshal substantial federal dollars to support an influx of green infrastructure and workforce training. Clean energy and energy efficiency have a major role to play in the stimulus package precisely because such investments can quickly put people to work in jobs that are difficult or impossible to offshore, are labor intensive in sectors where unemployment is high, and reduce spending on energy and decrease oil use. The stimulus package should aspire to reach \$100 billion in clean energy investments, in order to capture the potential to create a full 2 million new jobs in two years.