

FOREWORD



Van Jones, President and Founder, Green For All

Something remarkable is happening in America. People everywhere are daring to dream of a new future—one in which a strong green economy provides opportunity and security for all of us.

Community leaders and presidential candidates are talking about the promise of green-collar jobs to serve the planet and the people. We are on the cusp of a major change. We are ready to rebuild American competitiveness and leadership by investing in environmental protection and by investing in our people.

Our green future will be invented at the local level. It will be crafted by local leaders. This report offers those leaders some of the best thinking and models currently available for building green-collar jobs and the training pipelines necessary for city residents to fill those jobs and claim the promise of living wage careers.

This report is not a one-size-fits-all formula. Rather, it is a strategic framework within which local policymakers and advocates can develop a green-collar jobs initiative that responds to the realities of their local economies and communities while offering hope and opportunity to those who most need it.

What this report cannot provide is political will. That must be provided by all of us, working together to construct a green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty. We need bold and committed action, coupled with smart thinking, to simultaneously save the planet and reclaim the dream of an America we've always imagined.

Let's do it now. There's no time to waste.



Jerome Ringo, President, Apollo Alliance



INTRODUCTION

The movement to make American cities more sustainable, efficient and livable is perhaps the greatest new engine for urban economic growth, innovation and job creation in many decades.

The American Solar Energy Society estimates that in 2006 alone, renewable energy and energy efficiency were responsible for \$970 billion in industry revenues and 8.5 million jobs.¹ This number will grow exponentially if our nation commits itself in earnest to reducing carbon emissions and making economy-wide improvements in energy efficiency.

Unfortunately, America's growing green economy faces a looming labor shortage in sectors like manufacturing, construction and installation. In a 2005 survey by the National Association of Manufacturers, 90 percent of respondents indicated a moderate to severe shortage of qualified, skilled production employees like machinists and technicians. Similarly, the National Renewable Energy Lab has identified a shortage of skills and training as a leading barrier to renewable energy and energy efficiency growth.² This labor shortage is only likely to get more severe as baby-boomers skilled in current energy technologies retire; in the power sector, for example, nearly one-quarter of the current workforce will be eligible for retirement in the next five to seven years.³

Clearly if America is to rise to the global energy challenge, and capture the economic opportunity it represents, we need to prepare the next generation of Americans for the important work that lies ahead. Green jobs exist, and are growing, in a range of industries and at every skill and wage level. Many are in the skilled trades: manufacturing, construction, operation and maintenance, and installation. Most are “middle-skill” jobs, requiring more education than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree. Some are a bridge to high-skill professional jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities; others are perfect entry level or transitional jobs for urban residents looking for

a pathway out of poverty. In short, green jobs are the kind of family-supporting jobs that once anchored the American middle class, but in the industries of the future: industries like wind turbine manufacturing, solar panel installation, energy efficiency retrofits, and green building.

This publication focuses on local green jobs in clean energy industries—energy efficiency, renewable energy, alternative transportation, and low-carbon fuels. Specifically, it offers guidance on how cities can link residents to *green-collar jobs*: family-supporting, career-track jobs in green industries. We hope it will help cities across America develop strategies to expand their green economies, and connect the promise of the global clean energy future to the practical realities of local green economic and workforce development.

If your city or region wants to find ways to leverage local environmental, economic development, and workforce development programs to grow the green-collar jobs of the future, this report is for you. It explains the link between embracing visionary public policies and investments, and expanding demand for local green-collar workers. It outlines the importance of building on existing workforce and economic development initiatives to meet this demand. It lays out ways to link traditional training partnerships to Green Jobs Corps, or similar initiatives that offer pathways out of poverty. And it shows how the success of your green-collar jobs effort can help build a broader-based constituency for even more ambitious clean energy initiatives in the years to come.

The field of green economic and workforce development is a new and exciting one. The strategies outlined in this report build on the hard work being done right now in cities across America. Please let us know what you think—we look forward to hearing from you, learning from you, and building your experiences into the next edition of this report. Thank you for your interest in, and commitment to, building a clean energy future for America.



GREEN-COLLAR JOBS — A DEFINITION

Green-collar jobs, as we define them, are well-paid, career track jobs that contribute directly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality. Like traditional blue-collar jobs, green-collar jobs range from low-skill, entry-level positions to high-skill, higher-paid jobs, and include opportunities for advancement in both skills and wages.

Green-collar jobs tend to be local because many involve work transforming and upgrading the immediate built and natural environment—work such as retrofitting buildings, installing solar panels, constructing transit lines, and landscaping.

Green-collar jobs are in construction, manufacturing, installation, maintenance, agriculture, and many other sectors of the economy. A number of recent publications describe these jobs in detail (see “Resources” section). While some green-collar jobs (e.g. wind turbine technician) are in new occupations, most are existing jobs that demand new green economy skills. For example, construction companies building and retrofitting America’s cities need workers with traditional construction skills who also have up-to-date training in energy efficiency. And employers doing solar installation need workers with conventional electrical training, in addition to specialized solar skills.

Because the phrase “green-collar job” has been bandied about so much lately, it is important to emphasize once again what we mean—or rather, what we do *not* mean—when we use this term. Put simply, if a job improves the environment, but doesn’t provide a family-supporting wage or a career ladder to move low-income workers

into higher-skilled occupations, it is not a green-collar job. Such would be the case with workers installing solar panels without job security or proper training, or young people pushing brooms at a green building site without opportunity for training or advancement.

In sum, spurring the creation of green-collar jobs in your community means more than creating short-term work on individual green projects. It means building a sustainable economy, where environmental goals go hand in hand with social and economic goals. It means embracing visionary policies for your community, mobilizing all of the resources at your disposal to meet those goals, and explicitly working to expand the number of long-term, high-quality green-collar jobs for local residents.

