



Sustainability Update

Green Collar Jobs: A Sustainable Solution

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New Jersey's unemployment rate for January 2009 was 7.3 percent, the highest level in 15 years. This translates into the loss of 85,700 jobs in New Jersey between December 2007 and December 2008. As the state and local governments struggle to find solutions to stem the flow of jobs from New Jersey, economic development policies aimed at creating green collar jobs provide a viable option.

The green economy and green collar jobs are at the forefront of President Obama's economic stimulus plan and are a key goal in New Jersey's Energy Master Plan. In late February, Governor Corzine launched a \$2 million green jobs training program that will be piloted in Trenton and spread throughout the state.¹ Moreover, it is estimated that New Jersey will receive \$850 million in stimulus funds, a significant portion of which will be allocated to creating green jobs.²

Van Jones, a special advisor to the Obama administration on green jobs, defines a green collar job as "family-supporting, career-track, vocational, or trade-level employment in environmentally-friendly fields." Green-collar jobs are similar to blue-collar jobs; however, they have greater focus on environmental integrity. While green jobs typically require less education than a four-year college degree, they still require training and apprenticeship programs. The jobs often provide advancement opportunities, enabling individuals to work their way up from entry level positions to higher level positions, such as project manager.

There are innovative programs throughout New Jersey and the country aimed at creating green collar jobs and developing a labor pool qualified to meet the demands of the emerging green economy. The opportunities for job creation and training encompass diverse areas and meet a variety of sustainability goals, including energy efficiency, development of alternative energy, and conservation. The following examples of green collar training programs highlight only a few of the diverse green collar employment opportunities. For a thorough description of green collar job opportunities, go to www.greenforall.org.

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Energy Conservation Nationwide, buildings are responsible for 39 percent of our energy use.³ State, county and local governments have an opportunity to increase the energy efficiency of existing buildings and generate new employment opportunities through developing retrofitting and weatherization programs. The greening of existing buildings creates a

demand for individuals knowledgeable in green construction and maintenance, with skills in energy audits, water conservation, high performance HVAC systems, green roof installation and lighting systems.

Municipalities can partner with a non-profit, county workforce development center, or educational institution to offer training in green building practices for a wide audience, including youth in vocational programs, unemployed

residents, and individuals currently employed in the conventional construction industry. This program coupled with a municipality's commitment to retrofit municipally-owned buildings with energy and water conservation technologies will create "shovel ready" job opportunities while reducing long-term building operating costs. Once the training and public projects are completed, participants will have skills and experience that can transfer to the private sector.

New Jersey is slated to receive federal stimulus funding for such projects and training programs. Reports estimate that New Jersey will receive \$118.85 million in federal stimulus funds for the Weatherization Assistance Program for low income homes and \$74.8 million for State Energy Program funding for energy efficient programs in cities, towns, and counties.⁴

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development has provided funding to establish training in weatherization and building retrofitting. A portion of the funding was provided to Isles, Inc., a community organization in Trenton, to establish the New Jersey Center for Energy and Environmental Training. The Center developed two training modules centered on improving the energy efficiency of existing homes and buildings. The program trains individuals in building sciences and teaches them skills in air sealing, insulating, and conducting energy audits. At the end of the

training, Isles works to find graduates employment in the field. While the training was initially offered in Trenton, the training program will be expanded to operate in Camden, Newark and New Brunswick.

Promoting Alternative Energy The New Jersey Energy Master Plan identified a goal of meeting 20 percent of the state's electricity needs with Class 1 renewable energy sources by 2020. Achieving that goal will depend on developing a labor force skilled in solar panel installation, wind farm operations, and wind turbine manufacturing to facilitate the transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. Because the field is so new, after a few years of work experience, an employee can be considered an expert in the field.⁵ This enables workers to transition from entry level installers to more advanced positions such as project manager.



Reducing Waste The average American throws away 4.5 pounds of garbage daily.⁶ Recycling and salvaging present opportunities to reduce waste cost and create green-collar jobs.

As one example, the City of Chicago partnered with a non-profit to offer training on salvaging discarded computers for individual component-part recycling. The program trains students on warehousing skills, refurbishing computers for use in schools, community centers, and low income households, and how to disassemble computers for component parts.

Additionally, job opportunities are growing in the architectural salvage and deconstruction field. One example is Second Chance, a community



based non-profit in Baltimore that works with the city to offer training in removing valuable building materials and architectural pieces from buildings slated for demolition. The training covers carpentry and craftsmanship skills, sandblasting, painting, stained glass and wood repair. The project has been so successful that Second Chance has already expanded its warehouse and retail space, and has plans to replicate the program in Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

The Role of the Municipality Municipalities can stimulate growth in the green economy by setting targets for their sustainability goals, such as requiring a percentage of their energy to come from renewable resources, setting a zero waste target, and requiring the greening of existing buildings. In establishing sustainable targets, municipalities not only serve as leaders in their communities, they also create demand for green goods and services, which leads to jobs. Additionally, municipalities can create green collar jobs and needed training programs through partnerships with non-profits and private companies whose missions' dovetail with green jobs.♦

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¹ New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. "New Jersey's Share of the Federal Stimulus Package." February 2009. www.njchamber.com (Accessed March 17, 2009).

² US Green Building Council. "Green Building Research." www.usgbc.org. (Accessed March 18, 2009).

³ New Jersey Recovery and Reinvestment Plan. "Weatherization Assistance Program." February 2009. www.recoverynj.gov/recovery/programs/wap.html. (Accessed March 17, 2009).

⁴ Van Jones. *The Green Collar Economy — How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.

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