New York City Green Collar Jobs Roadmap

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Executive summary

The New York City Green-Collar Jobs Roadmap comes from a positive vision for the city: an inclusive green economy that employs thousands of New Yorkers in green-collar jobs that help upgrade our infrastructure, improve the health of our communities, and reduce our nation's reliance on imported energy that degrades the environment. Environmental sustainability, however, comprises only half of the vision: Equally important is that green-collar jobs are also good jobs that offer family-supporting wages, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement.

The green economy encompasses a range of goods and services that help provide environmental benefits such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, removing hazardous substances from water and land, improving air quality, and increasing urban vegetation. Ensuring that the jobs in this economy are good jobs is fundamental to preserving the middle class, increasing broadly shared prosperity, diversifying the local economy, and boosting the city's global competitiveness.

The economic downturn has given new urgency to finding innovative ways to create good jobs. We believe that a comprehensive, coordinated, citywide agenda that advances sustainability initiatives and prepares New Yorkers for green-collar jobs should be the cornerstone of any strategy to navigate New York City out of today's recession. It will provide immediate relief and lay the groundwork for a better future where the green economy is prosperous for communities, workers, and businesses.

New York City's recent bold sustainability initiatives are a good start toward re-envisioning economic growth and developing green job-creating industries for the future. We are building the foundation of an economy in New York City that can create thousands of green-collar jobs, from our ambitious plans for deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to community-based programs planting trees and remediating contaminated property. Now we need to make the promise of green-collar jobs a reality.

The Green-Collar Jobs Roadmap seeks to fulfill this promise. It is the product of the Green-Collar Jobs Roundtable—a participatory effort of over 170 job-training organizations, community-based programs, businesses, and labor unions committed to creating green-collar jobs in New York City. The roundtable was convened by Urban Agenda and compiled data on green jobs and workforce development best practices while develop-

ing more than 30 recommendations for achieving the shared vision of a more sustainable, prosperous, and just New York City.

The recommendations in the roadmap are from a series of working groups that came together as part of the roundtable. The working groups looked at all aspects of a green economy, including the current landscape, training, employers, job standards, and target populations. Alongside these working groups the political strategy working group provided guidance on how to move the green-collar jobs workforce development agenda through legislative and political channels.

Joblessness and unemployment are at all-time highs with a 9 percent unemployment rate and 361,000 jobless in New York City alone. However, the conditions that have squeezed millions of low-income and working-class people out of New York City long predate the current recession. The roadmap recognizes that the key to growing a green-collar economy will be harnessing our existing resources, from elected officials dedicated to sustainability to workforce development organizations and community groups pioneering career development in emerging green industries by strategically applying the current system's lessons.

At the moment, however, New York City does not have the training, recruitment, pre-employment, and job-readiness infrastructure and business services in place to reach our ambitious sustainability goals, expand our green-collar workforce, and further develop the city's emerging high-growth green sectors. We need to develop new training resources and partnerships and modify existing ones to ready our workforce for tomorrow's green jobs.

The roadmap lays out how we can do this, but it goes beyond traditional workforce development and industry support. The green economy's growth can revolutionize the way we build an industry's "human capital" and codify an approach that treats job creation, job quality, and environmental stewardship as interrelated parts of a long-term sustainability agenda. Green-collar job training should be more than career readiness—it should prepare New Yorkers for a world where every sector will incorporate aspects of sustainability.

The roadmap's recommendations comprise a step-by-step plan to grow an inclusive green economy and can be classified into six overarching issue areas:

Grow the green economy to create good green-collar jobs

Implementing policies that increase market drivers is necessary to ensure that jobs exist. Market drivers can be increased by expanding current programs, implementing large-scale retrofits and renewables development, promoting local manufacturing and green product development, and offering incentives to new industries. Implementing new policies will also diversify the city's approach to job creation and offer employment to a wide spectrum of workers with a range of skills in environmentally sustainable areas.

Ensure green jobs are good jobs and reach target populations

The importance of breaking the pattern of low-road jobs cannot be overstated. What's more, projects subsidized with public funds that pay poverty wages put a double strain on our resources: Not only is the public helping to fund the project, but the poorly paid workers need additional resources just to make ends meet.

Incorporating job standards into public projects would break this pattern. Sustainable working conditions, occupational health and safety oversight, and access to the safest workplace materials and products available must be promoted to protect workers' health and create healthy working environments.

The historical exclusion of disadvantaged communities must also be overturned. Promoting community-led development and striking barriers to employment will start making the new economy inclusive and provide resources to historically underserved areas. We must empower all New Yorkers to take part in our city's sustainability efforts and develop long-term career pathways that bring people out of poverty by providing good wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities. .

Help current workers and employers transition into "green" workers and employers

The "new" green economy will not be composed of completely new jobs and skills—in fact, the new work will mostly build on existing skill sets. For instance, building operators only need minimal skill upgrades to operate equipment that maximizes energy efficiency. Training tomorrow's public and private sector workforce and transitioning incumbent workers to new occupations can be done by incorporating green-collar training opportunities into career and technical education schools, the City University of New York, labor management training and apprenticeship programs, Workforce 1 Centers, and other citywide workforce development initiatives

Upgrading skills will help transition our currently trained workforce into the new economy. Likewise, helping existing businesses green their operations will save them money on utility bills and provide a competitive edge to their businesses.

Increase coordination and cooperation between city agencies and between local, state, and federal efforts

These recommendations provide ways to better coordinate intergovernmental efforts ranging from cross-agency cooperation to developing adult education curriculum to local, state, and federal cooperation to maximize resources for green-collar job workforce

development. For example, green job training and job creation efforts should be aligned by leveraging federal and state resources, such as funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Expand and green existing programs

"Greening" existing programs is a relatively easy way to begin building a trained and ready workforce for the new green economy. Incorporating green skills into existing training programs, for instance, would give current workers the skills they need for the new economy, yet at relatively low cost.

The city should also coordinate workforce development with existing sustainability efforts by integrating training and recruitment strategies into the city's green initiatives, programs, and requests for proposals to streamline the expansion and greening of existing programs.

Collect data so the growth of the green economy is prosperous

Collecting data and reviewing programs for effectiveness will ensure that resources are spent efficiently and programs are being adopted to best serve the needs of businesses, communities, and workers.

The economic and environmental challenges facing us are clear, and the consequences of inaction are dire. But together we can bring New York City into the future and make it a more prosperous, sustainable, and just place to live and work.

To read the roadmap and learn more about the roundtable please visit _www.urbanagenda.org/roadmap_.

About the Center for American Progress

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About Urban Agenda

Urban Agenda is an action-oriented public policy, research, and advocacy organization dedicated to building a socially, economically, and environmentally just New York City. It advocates policies and programs grounded in strategic research and supported by strong coalitions of unions, businesses, and community partners. Urban Agenda spearheads the Green Collar Jobs Roundtable Campaign, drawing on its extensive experience leading citywide campaigns and staffing effective coalitions. As convener of the NYC Apollo Alliance, Urban Agenda partners with business, labor, advocacy, workforce development, and environmental justice organizations.