



# Wealth & Jobs

Every community member has access to wealth-building opportunities and green jobs

# Goal: Every community member has access to wealth-building opportunities and green jobs.

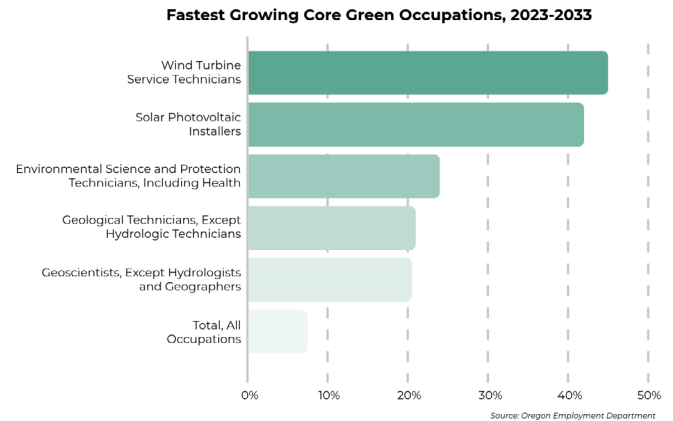
## Description

Climate change disproportionately impacts those who are already cost burdened and have little to no financial security. According to the Climate Jobs Institute, the average Oregonian stands to lose roughly \$12,000 in personal income annually due to climate changes already set in motion by past greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, modernizing the grid; investing in clean energy technologies like solar, wind, green-hydrogen and geothermal networks; and improving the efficiency of buildings offer tremendous economic opportunities for Oregonians.<sup>44</sup>

The economic benefits of this transition include new opportunities in the trades and entrepreneurial opportunities, but a history of racial discrimination needs to be overcome to ensure broad-based economic gains. Wealth-building through channels like homeownership and small business equity are the foundation of economic security, acting as a vital buffer against environmental and financial emergencies. However, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) continue to face deep-seated systemic barriers to these opportunities, leaving them more exposed to climate emergencies and left out of economic gains in the clean energy economy.<sup>45</sup> The Black Business Association of Oregon's [Black Prosperity Dashboard](#) shows Black Oregonians own homes at lower rates and have less household income than their white counterparts.

A future of shared prosperity can be built through needed investments in the low-carbon economy. Multnomah County is poised to benefit from a future where abundant, clean, and affordable energy is the norm. This is a future where green jobs are common in the workforce, industry and government cooperate to incentivize clean energy technologies, and local entrepreneurs create new industry-leading solutions that grow the green economy. This is also a future where barriers to green jobs, union jobs, and entrepreneurship are no longer hampered by discriminatory practices that have historically excluded women and Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, from accessing pathways to economic stability and wealth creation.

The Oregon Employment Department's occupational projections show robust job growth in green industries, especially wind and solar energy.



*The fastest growing core green occupations (2023-2033) include wind turbine service technicians, solar photovoltaic installers, environmental science protection technicians, geological technicians, and geoscientists. (source: Oregon Employment Department)*

## How we measure progress

**Indicator 1:** Growth in the clean energy job sector in Oregon.

**Description:** Clean energy jobs are a growing share of the workforce and show promise for workers' economic gains.

**Current data:** Oregon had 95,972 energy workers statewide in 2023, of which 51.5% worked in solar, wind or hydro-electricity production and energy efficiency.

**Data source:** U.S. Department of Energy, [United States Energy & Employment Report 2024](#)

**Indicator 2:** The disparity ratio is calculated by comparing the overall unemployment rate with the specific unemployment rate for the identified populations.

**Description:** The County can require this data as part of its reporting from training partners (like Worksystems or PCC) and from contractors working on County-funded climate projects.

**Current data:** Black workers are 1.43 times as likely, and Native American workers are 1.39 times as likely to be unemployed than the average worker. Teenagers are 3.13 times more likely to be unemployed, while workers ages 20 to 24 are 2.02 times more likely to be unemployed than the average worker.

**Data source:** State of Oregon Employment Department

# Strategy 1: Build career pathways into clean energy and green manufacturing by removing structural barriers for communities historically excluded from the trades.

## Why does this matter?

Building career pathways into clean energy jobs is critical because it addresses the twin crises of climate change and economic inequality. Oregon faces a massive labor demand — requiring approximately 36 GW of new clean energy and the creation of over 200,000 jobs by 2030 — that cannot be met without expanding the workforce.<sup>44</sup> By intentionally removing structural barriers for communities of color, women, and low-income workers, the state can tap into an underutilized talent pool while ensuring that the transition to a green economy doesn't leave behind the very people most impacted by climate disruptions.

Through the strategic alignment of County services, regional partnerships, and contracting requirements, we can ensure that every dollar spent on *decarbonization* acts as a deliberate pipeline for local wealth creation, prioritizing the very workers and community members who have historically borne the brunt of the climate crisis.

### STRATEGY CATEGORY

- ☐ County Strategy  
☒ Investment Opportunity  
☐ Community Leadership

### STRATEGY TYPE

- ☒ Advocate ☒ Research  
☒ Convene ☒ Implement

### COUNTY CAPACITY

- ☐ Existing ☒ Additional ☐ New

### COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

### COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

### COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

## Putting this into practice

- Align Oregon's climate infrastructure buildout<sup>44</sup> with Multnomah County's anti-poverty strategy.
- Prioritize decarbonization and the buildout of renewable energy at County-owned facilities while implementing the County's industry-leading workforce standards.
- Integrating job readiness training and apprenticeship recruitment directly from County services, ensuring that economic mobility is a central feature of our climate response.
- Ensure contracting requirements favor firms that provide living wages, benefits, and apprenticeship opportunities, preventing a "race to the bottom" in the green sector.

## Lead department(s)

Department of County Assets; Department of County Human Services; Office of Sustainability



## Strategy 2: Streamline regulatory hurdles that add time and expense to the installation of renewable energy and distributed energy resources like solar PV and battery energy storage systems.

### Why does this matter?

In order to unleash the economic promise of clean energy in Oregon, outdated rules need to be modernized and new administrative capacity has to be built. According to reporting from Oregon Public Broadcasting and ProPublica, Oregon trails nearly all other states in adding new sources of renewable energy. Iowa, a state with roughly the same population and usable volume of wind as Oregon, has built enough wind farms to generate three times as much wind power.<sup>49</sup> The slow pace of electricity transmission buildout in Oregon is one significant reason for the slow pace of renewable energy development.

Land use laws can also prevent Oregon farmers from harvesting the sun's energy with solar agrivoltaic installations. Slow administrative procedures make permitting residential solar and battery energy systems inefficient and more expensive, adding an average of \$7,000 in regulatory costs to the average rooftop solar system.<sup>50</sup> These rules and procedures must be improved to facilitate the flourishing of clean energy projects that support clean energy jobs and economic growth and provide more opportunities for households and organizations to invest in the clean energy future.

### Putting this into practice

- Support legislative efforts to create a public transmission authority to finance and build needed electric power transmission infrastructure.
- Support legislative and administrative changes that make it faster, cheaper, and easier to install residential solar and battery energy storage systems.
- Support plug-in solar legislation.
- Streamline the County's land use regulations to make residential solar energy and battery energy storage systems easier to permit in unincorporated Multnomah County.
- Advocate for local cities to adopt streamlined procedures for permitting residential solar and battery energy storage projects.

### Authorizing agencies

Oregon Legislature; Oregon Department of Energy; Oregon Building Codes Division; Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

### Lead department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Department of Community Services

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## Strategy 3: Develop a Youth Climate Corps that provides young people (ages 16-24) with paid work experience, job readiness skills, green job exposure, and direct pathways into highly skilled green jobs.

### Why does this matter?

Youth are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, facing both immediate environmental health risks like air pollution and long-term “eco-anxiety” regarding their future. However, current youth employment models often suffer from three major gaps: poverty wages that exclude low-income participants, “dead-end” seasonal tasks (e.g., blackberry removal without career growth), and a lack of professional networking.

By institutionalizing a Youth Climate Corps, the County and its partners can transform climate anxiety into agency.<sup>51</sup> This approach ensures that young people aren't just cheap labor for the public sector — they are an essential talent pipeline for the low-carbon economy — while providing important services that can benefit the community. Providing a “good job” — defined as one that offers living wages, union pathways, on-the-job training,

and professional development opportunities — prevents the replication of systemic poverty within green workforce programs. Multnomah County and its partners can work to modify and supplement existing youth employment programs to create a Youth Climate Corps that addresses climate resilience, *mitigation*, and care needs in the community.

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Low Med High

### Putting this into practice

- Research similar programs across the country to determine best practices.
- Convene local experts to map out needed community projects, job exposure pathways, training opportunities, and connections to trades, businesses, community-based organizations, and schools to create a supportive ecosystem for a program and connection points to future employment opportunities.
- Explore opportunities to leverage the SummerWorks program, Portland Clean Energy Fund, philanthropy, and other sources of funding to establish a program.

### Authorizing agencies

City of Portland, Portland Clean Energy Fund

### Lead department(s)

Department of County Management; Office of Sustainability

## Strategy 4: Provide comprehensive wraparound services, including childcare, mental health support, transportation, and specialized equipment, in workforce development programs.

### Why does this matter?

Workforce programs are essential for career readiness and climate-sector entry, but technical training alone cannot overcome systemic economic barriers.<sup>52</sup> For many residents, the primary obstacle to a family-wage career isn't a lack of skill, but a lack of stability.<sup>53</sup>

By embedding supportive services directly into the training pipeline, we move from a transactional model to a relational one. Integrated case management and mental health services address the historical and systemic stressors that BIPOC, justice-involved, and low-income individuals face. Furthermore, aligning these supports with County health and housing services ensures that those furthest from opportunity are the first in line for family-wage careers. Providing “flexible capital” for tools, work clothes, and culturally specific childcare isn't just a social service — it is a retention strategy that protects the County's investment in its workforce.

### Putting this into practice

- Support Preschool for All and expand childcare with flexible hours, especially for the trades, which have early start times for work.
- Establish low-barrier funds for clients to cover immediate costs like specialized tools, union dues, or transportation emergencies that often lead to program attrition.
- Embed apprenticeship and workforce programs directly into County health and housing offices, meeting residents where they are with clear pathways to economic mobility.
- Establish mentorship programs where journey-level workers of color provide emotional navigation and “soft-skill” coaching to new apprentices.

### Lead department(s)

Department of County Human Services; Health Department, Behavioral Health Division; Department of Community Justice

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# Strategy 5: Establish a guaranteed income framework designed to provide assistance to households disproportionately impacted by economic barriers and climate-driven costs.

## Why does this matter?

Guaranteed basic income can serve as a vital economic bridge for people who are struggling and an important tool for people trying to enter or reenter the workforce. Many studies have shown these programs are highly effective, giving households the flexibility to respond to their needs in real time while being able to establish enough stability to make longer-term plans.<sup>54</sup>

By providing people who have barriers to employment with unrestricted monthly stipends during professional training, such a program would ensure participants can be stable while acquiring specialized skills required for high-wage, low-carbon careers. This targeted support specifically addresses income challenges often faced during 8–12 week pre-apprenticeships or first-year training periods, shifting the focus from survival-mode decision-making to long-term wealth accumulation and professional mobility.

Focusing on these critical life transitions, such as career pivots or early childhood development, significantly multiplies the return on investment for every public dollar spent.

Direct evidence from local pilot programs, such as [Multnomah Mother’s Trust](#), proves that this “unrestricted flexibility” leads to near-zero debt loads and a 50% reduction in eviction risk.<sup>55</sup> By creating this essential household buffer, the County can empower historically excluded communities to absorb rising climate-driven costs in energy, food, and health, transforming a potential “handout” narrative into a strategic engine for community resilience and intergenerational climate justice.

## Putting this into practice

Research and advocate for funding pathways that would establish guaranteed income for people transitioning into the green workforce. Programs can include:

- Pre-Apprenticeship Guaranteed Income to support workers during 8–12 weeks of unpaid or low-paid training. This covers costs such as childcare, transit, and tools, ensuring that financial barriers do not lead to program attrition.
- Create a Job Transition Fund to provide monthly stipends that subsidize lower starting wages during the first year of an apprenticeship. By acting as a time-bound alternative to guaranteed basic income, this fund allows workers to maintain housing stability while they “earn and learn” their way toward journey-level wages in the green sector.

## Authorizing agencies

Oregon State Legislature

STRATEGY CATEGORY

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