
Green Career Pathways & Carbon Neutrality in Seattle

For Seattle City Council

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Green Job Sector Group

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About the Whitepaper

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Green Career Pathways & Carbon Neutrality in Seattle

Increasing green career pathways and identifying carbon neutral business practices holds significant promise to advance the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, implement race and social justice initiatives and support the sustainability of communities and economic development. Much of the initial research by the State and local and national institutions is available as a foundation upon which we can build. Seattle is positioned to become a regional model!

Vision Statement

The City of Seattle must support economic opportunities for low income, underrepresented people through its commitment to ensuring equitable access to education, training and developing lifelong green career paths. This commitment will be based on the promotion of a vibrant green economy across all business sectors that contribute to a carbon neutral Seattle.

Challenges & Opportunities

Market Analysis

A job market analysis has already been conducted by the State (Department of Commerce), but the focus has been more on private industry and not public or nonprofit sectors or sectors specific to Seattle that have potential to contribute to carbon neutral goals. A comprehensive market analysis is necessary to assess carbon neutral businesses and correlate the existing and future job market across all sectors.

Narrow Job Stimulus and Economic Development

The City of Seattle is currently supporting green job creation with a focus on weatherization, retrofits and capital projects that include green construction elements. The current workforce development is narrowly focused and does not promote a comprehensive outlook on existing and future green job opportunities or lifelong career paths. From the market analysis the City will be able to make informed decisions and investment in growth sectors, industries and businesses most likely to provide family-wage jobs and contribute to regional stability.

Programs That Reflect the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative

There is no legislation that ensures a commitment for low income and underserved people to be trained for or receive hiring preference in the job market. Workforce development must include the city's Race and Social Justice Initiative and values. Current policy exists with a focus on training and the green job industry, but broader and far-reaching legislation is still needed to require collaborative efforts among stakeholders to identify and remove barriers that hinder access and lifelong support in employment, education and training.

Systemic Change in Education and Training for Workforce Development

We must prepare low income, underrepresented people to be trained for and access green jobs across public, private and nonprofit sectors. The City of Seattle should make a commitment to

provide funding support, incentives and cross-departmental coordination to further develop vocational and post-secondary education tracks to access targeted job sectors. The educational tracks need to be driven by the job market analysis to determine what green career paths currently exist and what green industry sectors are projected as desired growth areas.

Making the Investment

Make the investment in order to achieve long-term results in economic and workforce development and regional and community stability.

Action Steps

Conduct Comprehensive Market Analysis

Conduct a comprehensive green job market analysis to determine which jobs exist now and are projected for the future. Identify jobs that the City either directly hires for or indirectly supports in other sectors through third party contracts, purchasing, business incentives and policy. This analysis should include which existing jobs need to be “greened up” and the necessary steps to identify businesses and define benchmarks to being carbon neutral.

Establish Hiring Preferences

Pass legislation that establishes hiring preferences to ensure that low income, under-represented graduates of green job training programs have a hiring preference for the City’s green jobs across all departments. The City of Seattle should review the federal Section 3 program under 24 CFR 135 that provides the type of training and job access preference above for certain HUD grant programs, including CDBG, HOME and Brownfields Initiatives. The City is not currently following the Section 3 regulations but could decide to do so after review. Seattle Housing Authority is also supposed to following these regulations when using HUD funding, and currently has an active, effective program to do so. Reference documents for this paper cited in the Appendix include links to the 24 CFR 135 and the HUD web site.

Design Education and Training Pathways

Create a focused roundtable of Stakeholders including K-12 public and private schools, nonprofit and community support groups, training institutions and business industry to ensure comprehensive career opportunities for youth and adults. This group would ensure:

- strong linkages to experiential environmental education,
- collaboration with carbon neutral business sectors,
- community outreach to target constituencies and recruitment
- access and support for low-income, under-represented population to education, counseling, training and appropriate ongoing services through and beyond graduation.

Identify Performance Milestones

- Continue to implement above strategies and monitor performance milestones across departments.
- Connect to benchmarks in the City’s Race and Social Justice Initiative and other Mayoral and Council strategies

Key Considerations

The City has jurisdiction to create ordinances, design and regulate programs that support education and training pathways, and review applicability of such programs to verify performance. The City should also retain and administer state and federal grant programs to support the initiatives.

Policy

To promote the suggested changes the City should require all departments to submit a bi-annual green jobs plan based on green business market analysis referenced above. Each department should outline its purview and how they will work with other City departments:

- to identify overlapping workforce needs,(e.g. meeting stormwater code requirements, management of runoff, Parks maintenance, SDOT work),
- to conduct public outreach and
- to coordinate with education and training institutions in development of education and training pathways.

Performance milestones must be included. A second tool would be for the City to require firms bidding on green-related work of a certain value to include a plan for how the firm will promote hiring low income, underrepresented people as part of their proposal. These plans would be evaluated and be considered as a key evaluation criterion for all bids.

Barriers & Disincentives

Costs for training low income people could be a barrier both in terms of local and federal funding availability. Also, in a down economy like the current one, companies contracting with the City may not have a lot of positions which need to be filled by new hires.

Key Stakeholders

Numerous stakeholders need to be involved in designing and implementing the changes. These include Council staff, Office of Economic Development, Office of Education, Workforce Development Council, educational institutions, training organizations, non-profits, and labor, faith based communities, neighborhood groups, among others.

Economic Impacts

Cost considerations include city staff resources, and training costs to prepare low income, underrepresented people to fill the jobs that contribute to carbon neutrality, as well as, a reduction in recidivism rates and increase revenue to the city through tax revenue.

Populations Affected

The primary populations which will be affected are low income, underrepresented people, and small minority business entrepreneur's who are not currently benefitting from economic opportunities that can be created in response to the City's commitment to carbon neutrality.

References

- Race and Social Justice Initiative: <http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/docs/090120rsjiReport.pdf>
- Workforce Development Council Seattle-King County Publications: <http://www.seakingwdc.org/reports/reports-publications.html>
- 2009 Washington State Green Jobs Economy [analysis]: http://www.workforceexplorer.com/admin/uploadedPublications/10258_Green_Jobs_Report_for_Web_2009.pdf
- High Skills, High Wages - Washington State Strategic Plan for Workforce Development: <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/HSHW2008.pdf>
- Code of Federal Regulations regarding Section 3 Program: <http://www.hud.gov/utilities/intercept.cfm?/offices/fheo/section3/Sect3-Regulations.pdf>
- Frequently Asked Questions about Section 3 Program: <http://www.hud.gov/utilities/intercept.cfm?/offices/fheo/section3/FAQ08.pdf>
- Seattle Jobs Plan: http://www.seattle.gov/EconomicDevelopment/jobsPlan/documents/SOED_JobsPlan_Booklet_FINAL.pdf