

The California EDGE campaign is a nonprofit coalition of major employers, educators, regional workforce development leaders, labor, and industry associations working together to propose sound policy that will prepare Californians for the high-wage, skilled jobs that will drive our state's economic recovery. We are concerned that California may lose the competitive advantage of a highly trained workforce as skilled 'baby boomers' retire. The problem is that California's older workers are better educated than each younger generation. Our replacement workforce is unprepared for the jobs of the future.

EDGE is committed to building support for workforce solutions that address employers' need for a skilled workforce and expand opportunity for all Californians.

THE PROMISE OF GREEN-COLLAR JOBS



Nationally and internationally, the challenges of global warming and rising energy prices have led to vigorous public and private investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and environmental sustainability across many sectors of the economy. The California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) marks California as a leader in this area. A growing need for 'green-collar' workers in new and transformed industries will be a key factor in the emerging green economy—either supporting continued growth, or constricting it.

In the green economy many new — or adapted — jobs will be ones that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. **These well-paying, 'green-collar' jobs are within reach of low-skilled and low-income workers as long as they have access to effective training programs and appropriate support. Indeed, 'green-collar' jobs are a tremendous opportunity to build pathways out of poverty for the unacceptably large number of Californians who struggle with self-sufficiency.**

As California prepares its policy framework to implement AB 32, it is critical that workforce development be integrated into these broader plans. California's economy must be strong, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive.

WORKFORCE STRATEGIES FOR THE GREEN ECONOMY

Many California policy leaders have recognized how critical workforce training is to the green economy, and more than a dozen "green jobs" bills have been introduced in the Legislature. **EDGE recommends these proposals build on the existing workforce development system and employ proven workforce strategies to take full advantage of this economic transformation.**

Specifically, we urge:

1. ***Link regional workforce training and economic development strategies to build prosperous communities and competitive industries.*** In California and nationally, there are hundreds of industry-focused workforce partnerships that are responding to

regional skills shortages. The best among them take a dual-customer approach by developing industry-specific workforce solutions and addressing the training, employment, and career advancement needs of workers.

- 2. Provide working adults with opportunities to move up the skill ladder.** Californians will need to upgrade their skills as the economy ‘greens’. Although these changes will result in some new jobs, more often new ‘green skills’ will be added to existing occupations. For example, solar installation and maintenance employers need electricians with additional specialized skills. To meet the demand for ‘green skills,’ we will have to expand education and training options for working and unemployed workers. Yet adult workers often lack the time, money, and flexibility to access post-secondary education and training designed for more traditional students. We need to increase the capacity of education and training institutions to offer programs that are accelerated, off-hours, and relevant to their students’ career goals. We can also help working students by expanding support services, such as on-site childcare and quality counseling services.
- 3. Link workforce programs and institutions to create career pathways to high-wage jobs.** We need to provide clear education and employment pathways to high-wage ‘green-collar’ jobs. We can do this by assessing the skills and experience needed to advance within green-collar employment and designing education and training opportunities that enable people to move up a career ladder. Yet many adults lack the basic math, literacy, and language skills to enter these career pathways. For them, bridge programs that teach basic skills within the context of industry-specific training are essential.

A MODEL PARTNERSHIP FOR GREEN WORKFORCE TRAINING

*Several of these strategies are coming together in the **Green Careers Training Initiative of the Los Angeles Infrastructure and Sustainable Jobs Collaborative**, a public/private partnership of employers, colleges, unions, the mayor’s office, the school district, community-based organizations, and the workforce system — led by the Regional Economic Development Institute at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College.*

The initiative will connect low-income residents to union apprenticeship and community college training for living-wage jobs in the building trades and energy-utility industries, and upgrade the skills of incumbent workers.

Working collaboratively, the Institute has analyzed industry needs and responded with training and supportive services delivered through partnerships among the College, WorkSource Centers, community-based organizations, and labor. Classes integrate basic skills into curricula and include a pre-apprenticeship program for hands-on experience. They have mapped skill requirements for employment opportunities in construction, public-sector, public and private power companies, and the emerging energy industries so pathways to higher-wage work are visible.

For more information, visit
www.lattc.edu/dept/lattc/REDI/Utility.html.