

Climate Workforce Proposal

Overview

Vermont's 2021 Climate Action Plan requires significant workforce support in order to meet its obligations. However, Vermont is currently unable to meet this need due to lack of adequately trained workers. Of clean energy employers who were hiring workers in 2022, 51.7% reported hiring was very difficult, and 39.5% reported it was somewhat difficult¹.

In order to support employment growth among critical climate careers, this public workforce education initiative will increase the number of individuals moving into climate careers in Vermont by raising awareness of the career and education pathways, and supporting existing programs that provide financial assistance for individuals and employers related to education and training. It will also provide resources to help current Vermont businesses shift their focus to climate-specific work, support students in paying for related education expenses, and build the foundation and partnerships needed to continue this work beyond the initial campaign period.

What is the Climate Workforce?

We have defined the **climate workforce** as clean energy jobs and careers in efficiency and renewables (from the annual PSD and CEDF [Vermont Clean Energy Industry Report](#)), plus some jobs in industries like forestry, agriculture, public transit, materials recovery, and education.

Purpose

While Vermont has an 83% high school graduation rate, only half continue on to post-high school education, and many of those do not ultimately earn a credential. This significantly contributes to Vermont's current climate workforce challenges—the state does not have enough residents qualified to fill these positions.

- Examples:
 - The Climate Action Plan Pathways Analysis model includes ramping up both weatherization (90,000 housing units weatherized by 2030), and heat pump installations (177,107 residential heat pump installations by 2030). To meet these goals will mean doubling the number of heat pump installations and home weatherizations.² This is challenging given that nine out of ten clean energy employers hiring in 2021 reported difficulty in finding the staff they needed.³
 - **52% more solar installers** will be needed nationwide from 2020 to 2030, and with electricity use increasing in Vermont due to electrification, the renewable electricity workforce will need to significantly increase here as well.⁴

Teachers, employers, and community members all report that not enough information is available about education/career pathways in Vermont, and that what exists is hard to find and understand. Only 30% of students nationally report that they know career/education pathways

¹ Vermont Clean Energy Industry Report 2022:

https://publicservice.vermont.gov/sites/dps/files/documents/Renewable_Energy/CEDF/Reports/2022_VC_EIR_Final_Report.pdf

² Vermont Pathways Analysis Report 2.0, by Cadmus and EFG, 2022

³ Vermont Clean Energy Industry Report 2022:

https://publicservice.vermont.gov/sites/dps/files/documents/Renewable_Energy/CEDF/Reports/2022_VC_EIR_Final_Report.pdf

⁴ <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2022/data-on-display/green-growth.htm>

are available to them. Without clear understanding of opportunities, Vermont will continue to fall short in building a skilled climate workforce.

Research by Advance Vermont shows that the framing used to discuss post-high school options matters. Individuals connect with stories of real people, especially those similar to themselves. Vermonters not only need to understand their options, but to see diverse success stories in the local climate sector that they can emulate.

Finally, employers are better positioned to contribute towards the state's plan when given dedicated resources to shift their focus to climate issues, and improve hiring prospects by providing clear, transparent information about pathways to careers and success at their organizations.

Goals

- Increased public understanding of climate careers available in the state; including wage information and 10-year projected openings.
- Increased public access to information about and financial aid for education and training opportunities in the state that lead to climate careers.
- More Vermonters can see themselves succeeding in a climate sector career.
- Businesses with the interest to switch focus to a climate-centered mission have the resources and guidance to do so.
- A partnership has been built for a sustained, ongoing campaign supported by partners and external funders

Objectives & Deliverables

- Create a 3-year climate workforce-focused public education campaign, led by Advance Vermont, that engages current and prospective employees, Vermont youth, adults interested in changing careers, and individuals yet to earn a postsecondary credential or those who are looking to upskill.
 - Targeted external communications to support awareness of climate pathways in Vermont, including partnership and collaboration with direct service organizations. Engagement to include workshops, webinars, and trainings.
 - Information about climate sector career and education pathways is centralized and easy to access on a website like MyFutureVT.org.
 - Video series features opportunities with employers, as well as employee success stories.

Appropriation: \$1.8m to be spent over three years

- Expand the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund's Business Coaching program to include a focus on working with a group of existing energy services businesses interested in adopting a climate-centered mission, and working with a group of younger trades people looking to start their own climate-centered business. VSJF would recruit a "cohort" of up to twelve existing companies, and a "cohort" of up to twelve trained tradespeople, to receive advanced business assistance to enable them to either pivot their existing business or start a new business that will expand the state's ability to deploy renewable energy and efficiency technologies to more homes and businesses across the state.

Appropriation: \$180k to be spend over three years