



On Earth Day 2007, Mayor Bloomberg announced PlaNYC 2030, a set of 127 legislative and policy initiatives designed to create a 'greener, greater New York'. These initiatives, and other green programs and projects, will demand hundreds of thousands of new jobs—green collar jobs. But the city's workforce development and training system is currently unable to meet this demand.

At the same time, the city is plagued by persistent unemployment and underemployment, particularly in low-income communities of color, many of which are also badly affected by the rising cost of housing and energy, and at greater risk of environmental stress. A well-trained green collar workforce could deal a double blow to these challenges—addressing environmental sustainability demands while also creating new job opportunities and pathways out of poverty.

To achieve this goal, Urban Agenda is spearheading the **Green Collar Jobs Roundtable**, a multi-stakeholder campaign to mobilize the city to prepare New Yorkers for green collar jobs. The Roundtable is developing a **Green Jobs Roadmap**—a shared agenda with targeted recommendations on expanding green collar training and certification, meeting green employers' needs and building an inclusive green economy. The Roadmap will be shared with mayoral and city council candidates in the 2009 election, to mobilize and direct the City to create a workforce development plan for green collar jobs.

At the first meeting in June 2008, the Roundtable identified several critical issues that must be addressed to develop a workforce development plan for green collar jobs.. Based on this input, the Roundtable broke into six Working Groups, five of which will draft a section of the Roadmap, while the sixth focuses on developing a political strategy to target city-based elected officials. All the groups will focus cross-thematically on five emerging green collar sectors in the city: transportation, energy, urban forestry, green product development, and environmental monitoring and remediation

The campaign is making excellent progress. As of January 2009, it has involved 170 partners—of these, 21% are labor unions, 20% are workforce development or education providers, 16% are businesses, and 14% are community-based, environmental justice, or faith-based organizations. Also represented are advocacy and environmental organizations, several foundations, and 12 city or state government agencies.

Key Roundtable Issues

Business/employer engagement – Engaging the private sector in developing green collar jobs is critical; failing to bring business to the table or neglecting business interests in formulating a workforce development strategy runs the risk of poorly allocated workforce development resources, increased dependence on out-of-state companies to provide 'green' products and materials, reduced competitiveness, and an undermined ability to bring renewables and recycling to scale.

Greater stakeholder collaboration – Collective action is necessary to best advocate for job-creating policies and incentives, develop training partnerships, leverage workforce development resources, and increase awareness of green collar jobs and emerging green collar subsectors. Collaboration is needed to prevent training for jobs that don't exist, engage unemployed and underemployed populations, ensure that green collar subsectors are unionized, and ensure that policy drivers of green collar jobs are passed and that incentives are available.

Green collar job data and projections – Comprehensive, hard data (both qualitative and quantitative) on green collar jobs is greatly needed, especially on green collar employers, job skill sets and skill gaps, job titles and salary scales, workforce and subsector growth and demand, effective training programs, and barriers to employment.

Green standards and certifications – Standards and certifications are a means to ensure that 'green projects' and 'green products and materials' actually meet their environmental mandates. They are also a means to define green collar jobs as good jobs that meet environmental and socio-economic goals. In addition, job certification will demand proper training and limit confusion over qualifications, skill sets and recruitment processes. Standards will also ensure that companies that invest in a well-trained green workforce benefit from competitive advantages in the green economy.

Bringing green collar subsectors to scale – For a green collar workforce to fully take advantage of the opportunities in the emerging green economy, relatively nascent subsectors, such as the residential retrofit market, the solar industry, brownfield cleanup initiatives and the city's recycling infrastructure, must be scaled up with the help of government resources and leadership.

Pathways out of poverty – Green jobs have the capacity to not only promote environmental sustainability but to also offer solutions to the problem of underemployment and unemployment in low-income communities. The potential exists to connect different stakeholders such as unions and community organizations, job training programs and employers, to improve the socio-economic situation of the underserved all while spurring growth in the green economy.

Roadmap Framework—Sectors and Subsectors

Each of the five identified emerging green collar sectors the roadmap will focus on are further divided into subsectors, each of which is distinguished by job titles, skill-sets, services and/or products. Subsectors are prioritized according to growing markets, labor shortages and a lack of workforce development resources, as well as according to career ladders that demonstrate a potential to foster pathways out of poverty.

Sector: Transportation

Subsectors: Mass transit, hybrid vehicles, green fuels, bicycles

Sector: Energy

Subsectors: Energy-efficient building maintenance, building retrofits, energy management, renewable energy

Sector: Urban Forestry and Agriculture

Subsectors: Park Maintenance, Tree Planting and Open Space Design, green roofs, urban agriculture

Sector: Green Product Development

Subsectors: Green Manufacturing, Recycling, and industrial ecology

Sector: Environmental Monitoring and Remediation

Subsectors: Brownfield remediation, indoor environmental quality treatment

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, business, and the community.

With its experience leading city-wide campaigns and staffing effective coalitions, Urban Agenda is well-placed to spearhead the Roundtable campaign. As convener of the NYC Apollo Alliance, the organization partners with business, labor, advocacy, workforce development, and environmental justice organizations. In addition, a close working relationship with the NYC Central Labor Council (CLC) enables Urban Agenda to tap the knowledge and reach of the CLC's 400 affiliated unions representing 1.3 million workers.