

The Green Economy Needs Subsidized Jobs

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In addition to enduring a climate crisis, our country is also experiencing a jobs and economic crisis. The current **5.4 million jobs shortfall** means millions of families are still struggling. After the most devastating year since the Great Depression, workers and families are far from a **pre-pandemic normal**. An estimated **23.6 million workers** have been economically harmed by the COVID-19 recession. Many of the pandemic's job losses **are likely permanent**. The economic destruction wrought by COVID-19 has been particularly damaging to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and immigrant workers, young people, and those impacted by the criminal legal system—all of whom all face persistent economic disparities and marginalization caused by countless structural inequities often rooted in racism and **baked into our labor market**.

Even when the economy is strong, however, millions of workers face persistent joblessness and economic marginalization. As the economy begins to recover, employment rates among Black and Latinx workers continue to lag relative to their white counterparts—reflecting a consistent pattern going back decades. Teens, and particularly young adults of color, face staggering rates of joblessness that could have **lifelong negative consequences** for their earnings and housing stability.

Alongside continued economic hardship, the **climate crisis is a real, persistent, and imminent threat** disproportionately felt by communities of color and among individuals with low incomes. Ultimately, the people in these communities struggle bodily and financially from climate and environmental hazards due to a mix of community disinvestment, relief aid mismanagement, and systemic racism. Communities and workers across the country have a role to play in greening public spaces, addressing blight, revitalizing housing, recycling end-of-life electronics, advancing urban agriculture, and modernizing public transportation, among other things. **Jobs tackling these issues—and more—are ripe for federally subsidized employment programs that address environmental needs while also providing paid work opportunities to people who have been historically marginalized and left behind.**

RecycleForce

RecycleForce is a certified electronics recycler providing environmentally sound solutions for managing end-of-life electronics in Indianapolis.

The program employs people with records within its transitional jobs program. It also provides professional and peer mentoring, high school equivalency instruction, housing resource assistance, driver's license reinstatement, counseling, re-establishment of child support, financial literacy, and tax preparation assistance.

Every dollar the program invests yields **\$1.20 in returns to communities and society**.

Addressing these dual crises offers an opportunity for the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress to invest in workers and communities in ways that redress economic marginalization and environmental racism. Specifically, Congress and the administration have a unique opportunity to follow through on the American Jobs Plan’s proposals to bolster green jobs, improve climate infrastructure, and expand inclusive workforce development programs by investing in environmentally focused, publicly funded jobs, transitional jobs, and subsidized employment alongside training, worker supports, and pathways to quality jobs.

More than **9 in 10 Americans** (93 percent) favor a national initiative that creates paid work and job training opportunities as part of recovery efforts. This policy solution—a federal investment in public service, or subsidized employment—is the only workforce intervention **proven** to put large numbers of unemployed people to work rapidly and put income in the pockets of those who need it most. Paired with training, worker supports, and pathways to growing quality jobs within emerging green and climate sectors, these investments can have transformational impacts on workers, communities, and the environment.

Strategies like the **Civilian Climate Corps**, which would be anchored in the U.S. Department of Labor, can combine the opportunity of green investments with federal subsidized and transitional jobs, which have been **proven time and again** to support pathways to employment for people who face structural barriers to employment. Such an initiative would put people to work in areas such as conserving public resources, advancing our communities’ resilience to extreme weather events, and furthering climate justice. At the same time, these jobs can help move people into **economic security** by providing living wages, benefits, and critical supports such as paid leave and predictable work schedules when paired with training, skill development, education, and other worker supports. This public service would ultimately benefit us all.

A federal public service jobs program grounded in the green economy can deliver on federal decarbonization targets while investing in the economic empowerment of people in marginalized communities, a key step to **redressing centuries of environmental racism**. To get our economy on track, we need policymakers to invest in workforce solutions like subsidized jobs that are rooted in equity and intentionally reach the jobseekers who need them most.

An equity-centered national subsidized employment program can support an inclusive COVID-19 economic recovery; increase job quality; **expand access to green economy jobs**; and lay the groundwork for a more fair, just, and prosperous economy and environment. A national public service employment program, including components tied to the green economy, is the right solution for today’s economic and climate crises.