



# The Green Collar Jobs Roundtable Campaign

On Earth Day 2007, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced PlaNYC 2030, a set of 127 legislative and policy initiatives designed to create a “greener, greater New York.” These initiatives, and many other green programs and projects, will demand hundreds of thousands of new jobs—green-collar jobs.

At the moment, however, New York City does not have the training, recruitment, business services, pre-employment, and job-readiness infrastructure in place to reach our ambitious sustainability goals, expand our green-collar workforce, and further develop the city’s emerging, high-growth green sectors.

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 expanding job opportunities and pathways out of poverty.

To achieve this goal, the Green Collar Jobs Roundtable, a multistakeholder campaign convened by Urban Agenda, is mobilizing the city to prepare New Yorkers for green-collar jobs. The roundtable has developed a vision statement of guiding principles for the campaign, and a Green Collar Jobs Roadmap—a comprehensive strategy to grow an equitable, prosperous, and just green economy. The roadmap includes specific recommendations to make the roundtable’s shared vision a reality.

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## A diverse group working together on a shared vision

The strength of the roundtable campaign derives from the sheer wealth of diverse skills, experience, and expertise its partners have brought to the process. Over the course of a year, more than 170 partners—from job training organizations, community-based programs, businesses, and labor unions—worked together to craft a shared vision of how to create an inclusive, green economy.

At the first meeting in June 2008, the roundtable identified several critical issues to be addressed in order to develop a workforce development plan for green-collar jobs. Based on this input, six working groups were created, five of which would draft a section of the roadmap, while the sixth focused on developing a political strategy to target city-based elected officials. The groups looked holistically at all aspects of how to create an inclusive green economy. This included cataloging sustainability policies that grow the green economy, evaluating job training opportunities, reaching out to employers, developing job standards to ensure that green jobs are good jobs, and identifying strategies to connect green jobs to underserved communities.

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## Key roundtable issues

**Business-employer engagement:** It's critical to engage the private sector in developing green-collar jobs. 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, and reduced competitiveness.

**Greater stakeholder collaboration:** Collective action by stakeholders 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.

**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 can 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 socioeconomic goals. In addition, job certification will demand proper training and limit confusion over qualifications, skill sets, and recruitment processes.

**Pathways out of poverty:** Green jobs can not only promote environmental sustainability but also offer solutions to underemployment and unemployment in low-income communities.

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## The roadmap's recommendations

The roadmap recognizes that the key to growing a green-collar economy will be harnessing our existing resources—from elected officials dedicated to sustainability to workforce development organizations and community groups pioneering career development in emerging green industries—and strategically applying the lessons of the current system.

The roadmap recommendations can be classified into six issue areas:

**Growing the green economy to create good green-collar jobs:** Implementing policies that increase market drivers is necessary to ensure that jobs and work exists. Market drivers can be increased through expanding current programs, implementing large-scale retrofits and renewables development, and promoting local manufacturing and green product development.

**Ensuring that green jobs are good jobs and reach target populations:** The importance of breaking the pattern of low-road jobs and overturning the historical exclusion of disadvantaged communities cannot be overstated. Promoting community-led development and striking barriers to employment will make the new economy inclusive and provide resources to historically underserved areas.

**Helping current workers and employers transition into “green” workers and employers:** In reality, the “new” green economy will not be composed of completely new jobs and skills—rather, much new work will build on exist-

ing skill sets. Upgrading workers' skills will help transition our currently trained workforce into the new economy. Likewise, helping existing businesses green their operations will save money on utility bills and provide them with a competitive edge.

**Increasing coordination and cooperation between city agencies and between local, state, and federal efforts:**

Better coordination is needed by intergovernmental efforts ranging from cross-agency cooperation to develop adult education curriculum to local, state, and federal cooperation to maximize resources for green-collar job workforce development.

**Expanding and greening existing programs:** "Greening" existing programs is a relatively easy way to begin to build a trained and ready workforce for the new economy. Incorporating green skills into existing training programs, for instance, would give existing workers the skills they need for the new economy, yet at relatively low cost.

**Collecting data to ensure the green economy's growth is prosperous:** To determine the best direction for the green economy, collecting data and reviewing programs for effectiveness will ensure that resources are spent efficiently and programs are being adopted to best serve the needs of businesses, communities, and workers.

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## 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 union, business, and community partners.

Urban Agenda spearheads the Green Collar Jobs Roundtable Campaign, drawing on its extensive experience leading citywide campaigns and staffing effective coalitions. As convener of the NYC Apollo Alliance, Urban Agenda partners with business, labor, advocacy, workforce development, and environmental justice organizations. In addition, a close working relationship with the NYC Central Labor Council enables Urban Agenda to tap the knowledge and reach of the CLC's 400 affiliated unions representing 1.3 million workers.

For more on Urban Agenda and to read the roadmap please go to: [www.urbanagenda.org/roadmap/](http://www.urbanagenda.org/roadmap/)

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## About the Center for American Progress

The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just, and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is "of the people, by the people, and for the people."