



## Recruitment & Retention of Women in Green Jobs Training and Employment Fact Sheet

### Opportunities for Women in the Green Economy

The growing commitment to sustainability has increased the demand for green products and services, and created a variety of new occupations and career paths. The resulting increased demand for workers offers exciting opportunities for women because they generally offer higher wages and better benefits than jobs where women are now clustered. Green companies need workers at all skill levels and with a variety of educational and training backgrounds who can design, build, install, retrofit, lead, and much more. Best of all, they are looking to hire. For example, Alliant Energy reported that the U.S. energy industry will need to replace 50 percent of its skilled technicians and power plant operators, plus 40 percent of engineers and line workers, in the near future due to its aging workforce.<sup>1</sup> The first step in linking women with careers in the green economy is recruiting and retaining them in the prerequisite training or entry-level positions.

Pursuing a “non-traditional” career, one in which one-fourth of the workforce or less is composed of women, may seem out of reach for some women. One key reason women do not go into green jobs, such as the skilled trades, are a lack of knowledge about the jobs available, including their duties, working conditions, wages and benefits, and qualifications. Women may also be hindered by a lack of training and education, not having female role models in those occupations, and by misconceptions about what occupations are appropriate for women.<sup>2</sup> Women need to be exposed to the green occupations available in order to best plan their careers. Workforce development professionals are in the position to encourage women to explore the breadth of green jobs and to dispel the myths which may limit their aspirations. Consider the following common myths about green jobs and women:

- **Myth 1: Green jobs are only for highly educated workers with a strong knowledge of math and science.** Many green jobs do require math and science skills, but the amount of knowledge varies greatly. Green-collar jobs range from low-skill, entry-level positions to high-skill, higher-paying jobs. This creates a spectrum of opportunities for women of all backgrounds to enter and advance in the green economy.
- **Myth 2: Green jobs are all in construction or the trades.** In fact, green jobs do exist in the trades and in construction, but there are many other occupations that support the green economy. For instance, there are manufacturers that produce earth-friendly products, designers of energy-efficient technologies, and investors that trade carbon credits.<sup>3</sup>
- **Myth 3: Green jobs are too dangerous and dirty for women.** Certain green jobs can be dirty, like installing insulation in a house, and others can sometimes be dangerous. However, women, like men, must compare the hazards with the benefits of taking certain jobs. Many traditionally female jobs, like care-giving and nursing, are difficult and may be dirty or dangerous as well. Many women do not mind getting dirty when they are paid a good wage, and with proper safety precautions, all workers can minimize the danger that they may experience on the job.
- **Myth 4: Women and men are represented equally in most occupations.** It is true that women have made tremendous progress toward gaining economic equality during the last several decades, and today women earn 60 percent of the college degrees awarded each year and fully half of the doctorates and the professional degrees. Almost 40 percent of working women hold managerial and other professional positions, and the number of women-owned businesses is growing at a rate nearly two-and-a-half times faster than the growth in the number of total businesses.<sup>4</sup> It is also true that women workers continue to be concentrated in traditionally female occupations. In 2009, women held 96.8 percent of all available secretary and administrative assistant positions, 81.9 percent of all elementary and middle school teaching positions, 88.4 percent of all nursing, psychiatric, and home health aide positions; and 74.4 percent of the nation’s cashier positions.<sup>5</sup>



## Recruitment and Retention for Training Programs

Green job training program coordinators need to reach out to women with essential information about the training process, the credentials to be earned, and career potential following the training. In addition, program coordinators should consider how best to serve women if the training is for a non-traditional occupation for women. Does the program offer female instructors and mentors? Are the tools and safety equipment sized appropriately for women? Can the program offer a women-only introductory class? Are the partner employers welcoming and responsive to hiring women graduates? By conducting outreach and providing a more welcoming atmosphere, program coordinators will help more women access and benefit from the program.

## Recruitment and Retention on the Job

Because many green jobs fall into occupational categories which are considered non-traditional for women, there is a greater likelihood that women may face obstacles to staying in a job or advancing up the career ladder. This means that women should be aware of those obstacles and armed to face them.

- **Lack of Support.** Some women may not receive adequate support from family or friends to encourage them to move forward with a non-traditional job. To ease skeptics' worries regarding a new job, women should study the field and occupation. Also to maintain confidence and determination, women can find a support group or mentor in the field. This will ease self-doubts as well as create a role model for how to overcome barriers.
- **Lack of Skills.** Some women are deterred from entering a particular trade or occupation because they lack the necessary skills. However, skill gaps can be overcome through on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, and remedial coursework, if necessary.
- **Difficulty Balancing Work and Life Outside Work.** Achieving a balance in work and personal lives is a concern for many working women. One-third of women believe that the difficulty of combining work and family is their biggest work-related problem.<sup>6</sup> The reality is that a woman working full-time in a high-skilled, high-wage job is much more likely to have paid time off, a flexible work schedule, and other family-friendly benefits, thus allowing more quality time to be spent with family.<sup>7</sup> There are many resources available that can provide women with the added supports that make a successful career and home life possible. For instance, community and faith-based organizations, female-oriented professional associations, and a variety of state and local programs can make a real difference.
- **Harassment in the Workplace.** Harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted). Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature; it can include offensive remarks about a person's sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general. Women should learn their rights and their options for recourse.

## The Role of Workforce Professionals, Training and Education Providers, and Advocates

In addition to the suggestions above for "opening doors" to women in the green economy, those in workforce development can assist in the following ways:

- When a woman comes to you for assistance, be open to helping her find a green job, even one that may be non-traditional. Encourage her to consider jobs that suit her skills, interests, and experiences and locate green job options that may be a good match.
- Get to know your local resources. What are in-demand green occupations in your region? What training programs are available? What resources are available that may be of value to women as they overcome barriers due to poverty or child care responsibilities?
- Business services staff at higher education institutions, One-Stop centers, and others in workforce development can also ensure that employers are educated about the concerns for women in non-traditional occupations. Develop specific materials on this issue to share.
- Help employers connect to excellent female job candidates exiting training programs in the area or looking to advance their careers.



- Inform women about steps they can take to deal with harassment. For instance, remind them that it is a good idea to keep a written record describing each incident, including what happened, where, on what date, and who was present. Ensure that women are aware of any employer complaint mechanism or grievance system available. Finally, educate women about the role of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in cases where discrimination is suspected.
- Consider establishing a network of female employees in a given industry. This peer network would not only serve as a support system for women, encouraging them to continue forward with their jobs, but would also create the basis for a mentorship program to encourage new recruits.

To listen to the teleconference that accompanies this fact sheet, and for further information about “A Woman’s Guide to Green Jobs” and other Women’s Bureau initiatives supporting green jobs, including the Women and Green Jobs Roundtables and green training projects, please visit the USDOL Women’s Bureau Web site at: <http://www.dol.gov/wb/>.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dexter, Kristen et al. “Women, Jobs, and Wisconsin’s Green Economy: Public Policy Roundtable.” *Wisconsin Women’s Council*. 2009. <http://www.cows.org/pdf/xrp-WIwomen-greenjobs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

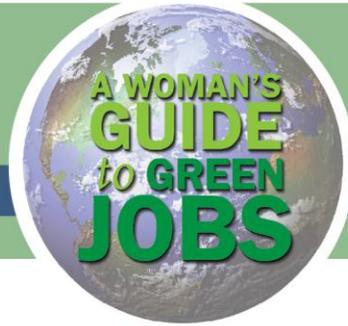
<sup>3</sup> Bracken Hendricks et al., “Seven Questions About Green Jobs: Why the Most Productive Jobs of the Future Will Be Green Jobs,” *Center for American Progress*. 2009. [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/04/green\\_jobs\\_questions.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/04/green_jobs_questions.html)

<sup>4</sup> Boushey, Heather and Ann O’Leary. *A Woman’s Nation Changes Everything*. Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress. 2009. [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/10/pdf/awn/a\\_womans\\_nation.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/10/pdf/awn/a_womans_nation.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. “Leading Occupations of Employed Women” (2009). <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/20lead2009.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Business and Professional Women’s Foundation. “Work-Life Balance” (2009). <http://www.bpwfoundation.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=4416>

<sup>7</sup> Workplace Flexibility 2010. “A Comparison of Men’s and Women’s Access to and Use of FWAs.” Project of Georgetown Law and the Urban Institute (2008). <http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/images/uploads/FWAComparisonbyGender.pdf>



## Additional Resources

The list below provides additional resources. The list is not exhaustive, and inclusion on this list does not represent an endorsement of any institution or program. As Web links can change, further Internet searches may be necessary to find the latest information.

### Green and Non-Traditional Job Training Programs

#### Government Resources

- Green Jobs, Workforce3One Communities. This site compiles an ongoing list of training programs, evaluations, and other green economy information. <http://greenjobs.workforce3one.org/page/resources/1000916955604530872>
- California's Energy Workforce Training Program. This program identifies positions which may offer preference to targeted populations and who to target to recruit. [http://www.energy.ca.gov/greenjobs/meetings/2009-12-02/2009-12-02\\_Brian\\_McMahon.pdf](http://www.energy.ca.gov/greenjobs/meetings/2009-12-02/2009-12-02_Brian_McMahon.pdf)

#### Non-Government Resources

- The Green Advantage. This organization offers individual green certification, including seminars and examinations. <http://www.greenadvantage.org/>
- Hard Hatted Women. This organization encourages women to get involved in non-traditional work and conducts support system building workshops. [http://www.hardhattedwomen.org/IOPS/Career\\_Index.asp](http://www.hardhattedwomen.org/IOPS/Career_Index.asp)

### Green Jobs

#### Government Resources

- O\*Net OnLine. O\*Net offers a search tool to find green job opportunities in a particular field. This site allows you to research the details of a green job, its requirements, salary, work hours, etc. and has tools for finding a job and building a resume. <http://online.onetcenter.org/>
- CareerOneStop. CareerOneStop's Green Careers section provides an outline of green careers in today's changing workplaces. <http://www.careeronestop.org/GreenCareers/GreenCareers.aspx>

- U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau. The Bureau maintains data regarding the position of women in the green workforce and highlights potential jobs, challenges, and training programs in regards to women. <http://www.dol.gov/wb/>

#### Non-Government Resources

- AmericanGreenJobs.net. This Web site is for professionals promoting and creating green jobs and enables people to share ideas as well as job opportunities. <http://www.americangreenjobs.net/>

### Workers' Rights

#### Government Resources

- U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Information about worker health and safety standards and available training. <http://www.osha.gov/>  
Specific information about safety and health for women working in construction at: <http://www.osha.gov/doc/acsh/haswicformal.html>
- U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. Information on state minimum wage laws and other wage-related rights. <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov>

### Sexual Harassment

#### Government Resources

- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. Information on sexual harassment can be found at [http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual\\_harassment.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm). For more information on sex-based discrimination see: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sex.cfm>.

#### Non-Government Resources

- National Women's Law Center. Answers to frequently asked questions about sexual harassment and includes tips on what to do if you are being sexually harassed at work: <http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=504&section=employment>

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