About this series

California’s Jobs and Climate Action Plan for 2030 provides concrete recommendations that can be applied in other states and the nation to ensure that workers are supported as policies to meet stringent greenhouse gas emissions reductions are implemented. It is premised on the value of a high-road economy, in which businesses pay the wages and benefits necessary to attract and retain skilled workers, who in turn perform high-quality work.

The Action Plan identifies specific complementary labor policies that can be incorporated into climate policies to generate family-supporting jobs and career pathways for disadvantaged workers. It then shows how training investments can deliver the skills required to perform these high-quality jobs and broaden access for all workers. It also provides recommendations on the transition for workers in declining industries to comparable livelihoods if jobs are lost.

Briefs in this series summarize the recommendations for some of the critical climate sectors addressed in the Action Plan: electricity generation, energy efficiency, electric vehicle manufacturing and charging infrastructure, public transit and infill development, trucking, and waste.

Role of energy efficiency in climate action

Energy use in residential and commercial buildings accounts for 12% of emissions nationally, and 9% in California. Energy efficiency is a major part of California’s climate implementation plan, accounting for slightly more than 10% of the greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed to meet the state’s 2030 target. It is central to national climate action as well.

Policies to drive investments in energy efficiency include incentives to buy down the cost of retrofits in private buildings, public and ratepayer investment in low-income weatherization and retrofits of public buildings, and increasingly stringent building codes that mandate specific requirements for new construction and retrofits to minimize energy use.
Ensuring that energy efficiency policies create family-supporting jobs in middle-class careers

The installation of more efficient heating, lighting, and air conditioning, as well as improvements to the building envelope, account for most practices to reduce energy use in buildings. In the industrial sector, greater energy efficiency can also be achieved through improvements in industrial processes.

The majority of jobs in energy efficiency are in the basic and skilled construction trades, where the registered apprenticeship system is the gold standard for training but has been underutilized. There is evidence of low wages and significant problems with the quality of installations in energy-efficiency incentive programs administered by utilities, state agencies, and other entities. In particular, weatherization programs are characterized by low wages, minimal training, and a lack of career ladders. Only a handful of the many dozens of energy efficiency programs in California have requirements that workers installing or maintaining energy efficient technologies meet minimum skill standards. While public and private investment entities as well as ratepayers have put significant dollars into workforce training for energy efficiency, the return on the investments will be lost unless the demand for a skilled workforce is created. It is therefore critical to include skill standards or other labor standards as requirements for participation in incentive programs.

The most successful training programs incorporate energy efficiency skills as just one component in training for the skilled construction trades, rather than focusing solely on energy efficiency. A notable example of the type of skill certification that can be incorporated as a requirement in a utility incentive program is the California Advanced Lighting Controls Training Program, a high-road labor-management training program and certification. It provides skill upgrades for certified electricians, and helps ensure that this emerging technology is properly installed and maintained. It also supports equity goals because it is part of the certified apprenticeship system pathway, and thus broadens opportunities for entry-level trainees as work expands. When linked with programs to prepare workers for apprenticeship, certified apprenticeship has been highly successful in increasing the number of workers of color in family-supporting skilled trades careers.

Case study: Making weatherization a path to a career

The weatherization program implemented by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) provides a starkly different model than most programs, and has a track record of superior outcomes for workers.

After originally outsourcing weatherization to subcontractors, LADWP brought the work in-house and created the Utility Pre-Craft Training program, an earn-while-you-learn training program that is much like a pre-apprenticeship. LADWP recruits entry-level workers from disadvantaged communities and creates a pipeline into career-track utility work in the trades through training and weatherization work experience. When the program was created in 2013, the base wage was $16 per hour and included full union health and welfare benefits.

Investor-owned utilities who contract out their weatherization programs, on the other hand, tend to provide low wages to weatherization workers and also have lower quality installations. An analysis of the cost of raising wages for workers in the IOU program estimates that a 20% pay increase would increase the cost of home weatherization by just 2%. 
### Job Quality Policies: to ensure family-supporting jobs

| Energy Efficiency Incentive Programs | Include fair and responsible employer standards in all IOU energy efficiency incentive programs.  
| | - Incorporate skilled and trained workforce standards for contractors participating in IOU incentive programs.  
| | - Utilize specialized certifications for emerging technologies, such as advanced lighting and other building controls.  
| | Identify program models that increase the scale of projects and centralize contracting, for example by targeting multi-family residential retrofits and district building electrification, and set minimum wage and benefit standards.  
| | Incorporate workforce analysis into emerging technology support programs to identify skill standards.  
| Public investment in Institutional & Public Buildings | Use community workforce agreements (CWAs) for retrofits in the municipal, university, schools, and hospital (MUSH) sector.  
| Weatherization Programs | Use responsible procurement policies for public procurement weatherization contracts  
| | - Mandate wage and benefit floors for participating contractors.  
| | - Give preference to contractors that use weatherization as on-the-job training in a pre-apprenticeship framework, linked to registered apprenticeship.  
| Workforce Training Strategies: to prepare current and future workers and provide needed skills to employers  
| All Energy Efficiency Programs | Fund and participate in statewide or regional pre-apprenticeship training strategies. Use weatherization and other low-skilled activities as on-the-job training for apprenticeship preparation.  
| | Support the development of skill-upgrade programs for incumbent workers through journey upgrade programs, such as the California Advanced Lighting Controls Training Program (CALCTP).  
| | Support the development of high-road training partnerships for ongoing operations and maintenance, such as the SEIU’s Green Janitors Training Program.  
| | Track training program outcomes for graduation rates, attainment of industry-recognized credentials, job placement, retention, wages and wage progression.  

The report "Putting California on the High Road: A Jobs and Climate Action Plan for 2030" offers a vision and plan for integrating economic and workforce development into major climate policies and programs to help achieve California’s major climate goals: achieving 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and transitioning to a carbon neutral economy by 2045. It was prepared by the UC Berkeley Labor Center and lead author Carol Zabin, and was submitted by the California Workforce Development Board to the state legislature in September 2020.

View the full report along with briefs in this series at: https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/putting-california-on-the-high-road-a-jobs-and-climate-action-plan-for-2030/.