

For Immediate Release

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Report: Chicagoland positioned to attract green collar jobs and train new workers

Federal recovery dollars and other investments create the potential for thousands of new green collar jobs, report calls for improved system to prepare workers

Though the economy remains weak and the unemployment rate is still high, a new report released by the Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative (the Initiative) points to the job creation potential of green collar jobs in the Chicago region. It highlights the numerous policy opportunities – including climate legislation, additional resources for environmental programs, and changes to environmental standards – that may help spur the development of new green collar jobs throughout Chicagoland. The specific occupations most likely to experience significant growth are energy efficiency measure installers and auditors, primarily in response to the projected increase in the number of residential retrofits expected to be completed in the coming years.

“Both the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Illinois Capital Bill contain significant investments in environmental programs, including expansion of the Weatherization Assistance Program and Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant, improving building energy efficiency, and developing sustainable transportation,” said Paige Finnegan of e-One and Initiative Steering Committee Member. Finnegan added, “if implemented wisely, these new programs could create a significant number of new employment opportunities as well as transform existing jobs.”

Chicagoland is well positioned to respond to these opportunities by training new workers and providing supplemental training to the existing workforce. The region already has a strong workforce development and training infrastructure, a track record of developing successful industry-specific initiatives, experience in green curriculum development, and an extensive network of workforce development and training providers on which to draw.

Said Jennifer Keeling of the Chicago Jobs Council and Director of the Initiative, “the Chicago area has significant experience and resources on which to build. The region has developed successful sector-focused workforce development strategies in the past, and can draw on its extensive network of community-based training providers, community colleges, and other training organizations to respond to these new opportunities. What will be critical is to ensure that the trainings developed in response to these emerging green collar jobs are accessible to a range of job-seekers, including those with low skill levels.”

Though the Chicagoland region already has a strong foundation, to fully realize the potential of the expanding green economy and green collar job opportunities, the Initiative recommends: prioritizing collaboration and partnerships, creating a process for ongoing standardization of curriculum for green training programs, ensuring comprehensive workforce strategies to engage

low-skill workers, establishing a standard weatherization process, promoting the development of integrated green workforce and economic development strategies, and establishing minimum common building standards.

“As a result of the Initiative working with its diverse Partners to implement these recommendations, we believe that green collar job opportunities in Chicagoland will not only grow, but will grow to benefit the workers and job-seekers who are most in need of these opportunities,” said Kindy Kruller of the Delta Institute and Initiative Steering Committee Chair.

To download the report, go to: <http://greencollarchicago.org/uploads/GreenCollarWorkforce.pdf>.

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The **Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative** works at the intersection of workforce development, economic development, and environmental sustainability. It is managed by the Chicago Jobs Council and is a multi-organizational collaborative of partners from labor groups, community organizations, businesses, education, sustainability organizations, and environmental and workforce development non-profits. The Initiative's mission is to facilitate the development of a skilled workforce that is ready to meet employer demands in the emerging green economy and to capture new employment opportunities for Chicagoland workers. This will be accomplished through the development and promotion of a green collar workforce system that integrates green business growth, innovative workforce development strategies, and emerging environmental practices and policies into a vibrant regional economy. For more information, visit www.greencollarchicago.org.

The **Chicago Jobs Council** is a 28-year old policy and advocacy organization that works with its members to ensure access to employment and career advancement opportunities for people living in poverty. For more information, visit www.cjc.net.