



## Policy Position on Workforce Development Initiatives

Millions of Americans work in the rapidly growing clean energy industry, a sector that supports the US economy through both clean power generation and designing and retrofitting our nation's buildings. Building efficiency is central to a clean energy future in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and market forces surrounding the built environment are changing. Demand for energy-efficient technologies and high-performance buildings is on the rise due to their environmental benefits and increasing affordability.

KEEA, EEA-NJ, and both organizations' memberships understand that meeting these market demands will require a NJ and PA workforce that can design, build, and operate high-performance buildings. It will also require professional service providers who are trained in the selling, insuring, and financing of these buildings, as well as manufacturers who design and supply energy-efficient technologies.

This growing complexity of the building sector and the pace of technological innovation in energy efficiency has required a reassessment of how training and education are provided to the workforce. Workforce development challenges are particularly acute in energy efficiency building trades and highly skilled construction.

To better understand its industry's workforce development needs, EEA began a process of engaging KEEA and EEA-NJ members in 2021 with surveys and interviews. In February 2022, EEA released the results of this research with *Workforce Needs & Barriers, Survey Results*.

EEA then engaged a team of graduate Sustainability Management Candidates at Columbia University to review best practice approaches to energy efficiency workforce development in multiple jurisdictions. The Columbia University team reviewed barriers and policy challenges highlighted in the EEA Survey Report and conducted an intensive series of stakeholder interviews and desktop research analyses.

The final report, [Workforce Development for Energy Efficiency in New Jersey and Pennsylvania](#), was released in August 2022. The report made specific and actionable recommendations for NJ and PA.

KEEA and EEA-NJ support and recommend the following from the report's proposals:

**For Employers:**

- Make opportunities for growth and upward mobility available and clear in order to showcase career value to candidates and increase retention.
- Offer employee benefits and connect employees with resources for wrap-around services, such as childcare and transportation.
- Encourage continued education and upskilling post-hiring by incentivizing on-the-job learning of new skills.

**For Government and Policymakers:**

- Encourage energy efficiency education with tax incentives, grant offerings, and wrap-around services to support individuals pursuing training and certification in the energy efficiency field.
- Offer funding for energy efficiency training programs with metrics for recruiting trainees from underrepresented communities, including rural areas.
- Support and value workers transitioning away from the fossil-fuel industry.
- Begin introducing environmental studies, climate change, and energy efficiency concepts and career tracks early in the public school curriculum.
- Ensure federal and state government interdepartmental collaboration.

**For Training Providers:**

- Identify local community centers as in-person locations for communities to procure information about energy efficiency careers.
- Strengthen partnerships with local employers to offer on-the-job training as part of educational programs, and ensure all training matches real-time energy efficiency industry needs.
- Coordinate training schedules with local employers to ensure graduated trainees will enter the workforce when local contractors have job opportunities readily available.
- Seek funding opportunities to eliminate out-of-pocket costs for trainees and offer wrap-around services to increase the inclusion of unemployed, underemployed, and disadvantaged communities.
- Partner with state funding sources to curate a business network of job opportunities, in which businesses are incentivized with wage funding support to recruit from underrepresented communities. Share these opportunities on a streamlined online platform.
- Utilize technology and media to recruit from a broader pool of candidates.
- Offer contractor training programs to upskill small and minority-owned energy efficiency businesses, supporting business development of soft skills and contractor certifications.
- Ensure program advisory boards include employers so that curriculums match real-time workforce needs.
- To reach rural communities, consider partnering with existing local organizations to offer mobile and remote recruitment and training sessions to leverage resources across a broader area.