



Date: April 30, 2010

To: Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

From: Deborah L. Frett, Chief Executive Officer,
Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Re: Comments on Green Job Data Collection

Introduction

Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation is pleased to see the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) soliciting comments on the definition and tracking mechanisms of green jobs.

The green economy will offer new—and sustainable—opportunities for consumers, workers, business owners and the environment. As an organization dedicated to the creation of successful workplaces for both working women and employers, BPW Foundation is particularly interested in ensuring that women are part of the workforce meeting America's clean energy needs.

Summary of Comments

- The importance of obtaining and monitoring demographic information on the green worker, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, prior income level and employment status at time of hire.
- While an all encompassing view on what jobs are deemed green can improve awareness of the dangerous situation that climate change presents, there may be unintended consequences toward a continuation of occupational segregation.
- With the creation of new jobs in the green economy there is the opportunity to improve equity and access for all who fill those positions.

Identifying the Green Worker

Green jobs are only as powerful as the workers that fill those positions. While it is imperative that the federal government officially define green jobs and the total number of these jobs, we must not lose sight of the Americans that will be performing the work. After a discussion with a BLS employee, it was confirmed that this project will not include capturing demographic information of green job workers for reporting purposes.

If the government does not track gender (and other demographics) then the promise of green jobs to move under-represented populations into higher-paying, career-track employment may be lost. The green economy is ripe with potential to move women into the sustainable careers of the future, namely non-traditional jobs. As a country, we



cannot let this movement happen without tracking who has been and who will be hired. If this is not made a priority, many of the most vulnerable will be left behind.

To ensure access and equity in these newly created, or newly updated positions, the government must make it a priority to monitor who is employed in this emerging sector and furthermore, create an opportunity to move underserved populations from unemployment or under-employment to sustainable jobs and provide them with the skills and support they need to have fulfilling and enduring careers.

If Everything is Green...

The greater the awareness of climate change and the more people that are working in this field, the better our country will be in combating its affects. It is both commendable and appropriate that we label the administrative assistant employed at a business that produces a green product to be a green job, as well as the server at a sustainable catering company and the truck driver moving green goods (in a vehicle running on clean energy). But will including all of these jobs move us to a greener way of living? And will this lead to the unintended consequences of continued occupational segregation based on gender?

Inclusion is the Answer

The majority of women (80 percent) are clustered in 20 of 420 Department of Labor-identified occupational fields, most of which are low-wage positions. The greening of the economy is an exciting opportunity to move women into higher-paying, non-traditional fields (where 25 percent or less of the workforce are women) such as energy efficiency.

Non-traditional jobs pay 20 to 30 percent more than those defined as “traditionally female,” and these jobs typically offer better benefits, greater career and training opportunities and higher job satisfaction.

Pennsylvania State University Professor Kevin Abbey in “Pennsylvania Green Jobs: Status Report” identified five characteristics of green jobs, they are: efficient, energy, environment, economy and equity. Abbey defines equity as “jobs that provide a pathway to prosperity for individuals frequently not engaged in skilled trades or the construction industry,” such as women, women veterans, and people of color.

BPW Foundation agrees that no job can truly be green unless the position is available to all Americans. For the green economy to be fully realized there must be an emphasis on access and equity for those performing the work of energy efficiency and waste reduction.



Business and
Professional
Women's
Foundation

BPW Foundation wants to level the playing field to ensure women get in on the ground floor for sustainable employment. If BLS tracks demographics for green jobs as it currently does for other industries, the greening of the workplace will include a new range of opportunities for women to compete and contribute. The resulting diversity in the broader labor market will support a stronger economy and success for businesses and communities, as recent research on diverse workplaces has demonstrated, (Katherine Phillips, "Diversity Helps Your Business—But Not The Way You Think," Forbes.com; June 2009.)

In Pursuit of a Greener Future

The threat to humans is real. Climate change is real. As climate writer and Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress Dr. Joseph Romm noted in an Earth Day speaking engagement, "Future generations will not judge us on Afghanistan or even health care, but on how we deal with climate change."

As a country we are faced with the tremendous goal of creating sustainable jobs that will contribute to a healthy planet. In this pursuit, we must collectively ensure that everyone has access to green and greener job options and that women have the skills and support they need to succeed. BPW Foundation is hopeful that we can find ways to work together to ensure that the green economy is inclusive of everyone.

Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Business and Professional Women's Foundation is partnering to create successful workplaces by focusing on issues that impact women, families and employers. Successful Workplaces are those that embrace and practice diversity, equity and work-life balance. BPW Foundation supports workforce development programs and workplace policies that recognize the diverse needs of working women, communities and businesses. BPW Foundation is a 501(c)(3) research and education organization. www.bpwfoundation.org