



ENERGY WORKFORCE SECTOR STRATEGY

Energy Workforce Sector Strategy (EWSS) Central Valley Regional Industry Forum - Visalia July 17, 2013 Co-hosted by PG&E and Proteus, Inc.

Meeting Minutes

PARTICIPANTS

In Person:

Amy Beley, Build It Green
Harold Harris, PG&E
Desiree Landero, Proteus, Inc.
Jose Laneros, Proteus, Inc.
Mike Martin, PG&E
Hector Uriarte, Proteus, Inc.
Diane Vessels, Build It Green
Lisa Shell, PG&E
Jim Caldwell, Workforce Incubator
J.D. Stack, Workforce Incubator

By Phone/Webinar:

Ahmed Ganji, BASE Energy, Inc.
Rick Halperin, GC Green
Dave Shelton, Enovity, Inc.
Brad Hurte, Workforce Incubator

PRESENTATIONS

- Lisa Shell opened the meeting. She described PG&E's Energy Workforce Sector Strategy (EWSS) Projects and pointed to policies that are driving energy efficiency (EE) adoption.
- Hector Uriarte and Jose Laneros also welcomed participants and described workforce programs of Proteus, Inc., which has been providing training and workforce assistance for 45 years.
- Jim Caldwell then presented an overview of the Energy Workforce Sector Strategy (EWSS) project. This included:
 - Energy efficiency market drivers
 - EWSS research process
 - Long-term and near-term employment outlook
 - Distribution of job openings by region
 - Survey of education and training programs pertinent to energy efficiency
 - Current and planned portfolio of energy efficiency training programs



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- Then Brad Hurte walked participants through slides of the EWSS web portal that focused specifically on the employer resources section of the portal and its linkages to various college and university programs relating to energy efficiency. He asked for feedback and suggestions for improving the portal content.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Key Points:

1. Jose Landeros asked if jobs data is available by county.
2. Ahmed Ganji pointed out that San Francisco State has a program to train energy engineers.
3. Jim Caldwell indicated that student learning outcomes should be the crux of what employers need; however, they are not always detailed enough to capture these needs.
4. Rick Halperin said the information on the portal is good. But he said the challenge is that training is not enough for people entering the field. He would like to see more externships (i.e., paid internships). So people can transition out of a program into employment.
5. Rick and Hector said it is difficult for new workers to break into the large-scale solar industry due to the “difficult time consuming infrastructure” of the labor unions. For this reason GC Green tends to focus on the EE industry for returning veterans.
6. Harold Harris said more people are needed that are capable of doing calculations for growers relating to water usage and energy savings.
7. Mike Martin said that large industries typically require highly qualified EE people (e.g., >10 years experience) to oversee plant retrofits. The market for skilled industrial technicians, MEs, EEs, and CEs is tight right now.
8. Mike pointed out that industrial technology training is often missing from curricula these days. He said he graduated years ago from such a program at Fresno State.
9. Rick Halperin identified energy auditors and lower level retrofitters as job categories that meet the needs of veterans transitioning to the EE workplace. Also, measurement and evaluation people are in demand.
10. Amy Beley pointed out that expertise in building modeling software (e.g., MicroPass, EnergyLogic, EnergyPro, and DOE II) is an area of big need now for both commercial and residential buildings. Often times retrofit projects require modeling before specifying EE measures to be installed.
11. Rick Halperin identified as a gap the need to get people up to a basic level of capability so that they can then pivot to different job opportunities. But precise skills must be tied to actual work experience. “It’s not just about certificates.”
12. Diane Vessels believes career pathways are not well defined. Brad responded that he is working with college deans to map out career pathways.



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Discussion Outcomes:

1. Harold Harris emphasized that there are few people available with skills needed for agricultural pumping, irrigation and water conservation work. He said PG&E does not have many agricultural energy specialists left. He would like to see at least one in each division.
2. Dave Shelton said he would share the web portal resources with his colleagues for future hiring help.
3. Mike Martin said PG&E is struggling with the water-energy nexus. There is a strong demand for water conservationists. He thinks this could be a two-year certificate program. He pointed out that Sac State's water program would be good to add to this list of resources.
4. Diane Vessels recommended the web portal include more links to internships.
5. Amy Beley suggested the web portal needs more on career mentoring as a transition from training to a job.

Next Steps:

1. Amy Beley stressed the importance of talking with workers in the field. Jim indicated we have talked with senior energy specialists who are at the top of the career ladder. He said EWSS would conduct focus groups with employers and then bring in people currently working in the field.
2. Rick Halperin asked that we maintain an ongoing dialog and develop case studies that identify high-level opportunities where the workforce will be engaged. He stressed the importance of repeatable engagements such as school districts.
3. Harold Harris pointed out that Fresno State operates the Center for Irrigation Technology (i.e., pumping) and Cal Poly has the Irrigation Training Resource Center, which may offer certificates. Also, Reedly College is a good school with an agricultural emphasis, as is Butte College. Jim said he would pass this information along to Nancy Gutierrez with the Community Colleges.

POST-MEETING DISCUSSION

Rick Halperin continued the discussion with J.D. Stack following the adjournment of the meeting. Here are key points from that conversation.

1. GC Green works with returning vets to prepare them for EE jobs. A frequent challenge for vets with families is finding recurring work due to the short-term nature of many projects.
2. What is needed more than training is direct work experience (i.e., paid internships).
3. "Sometimes we overthink this workforce development stuff. Experience speaks volumes with employers."
4. Rick suggested that EWSS could act as a facilitator to do things in the Central Valley to showcase a better model. Specifically, he suggests we identify EE projects to showcase (e.g., Visalia's municipal buildings retrofit project) and then partner with regional nonprofit organizations that serve vets and/or underserved populations to coordinate training and paid internship placements. He believes that by working with WIBs, economic development organizations, and utilities to leverage resources we could do a lot to showcase an impactful model for introducing new workers to the EE industry with direct work experience being a significant value add. He also said that this partnering



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approach could leverage nonprofits and minority-owned, women-owned, or Native American-owned enterprises to help developers secure project contracts with municipalities and other institutional customers.

5. Rick said, “This approach, with a direct work experience component, would tap the true meaning of workforce development for potentially sustainable jobs”.

Minutes prepared by JD Stack.

Corrections can be sent to JD@EmpowerAdvisors.com.