

Introduction to the Green Employers Council

The Redwood Coast Green Employers Council (GEC) is an official commission of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors and exists under the authority of the Humboldt County Workforce Investment Board (WIB). The GEC was formed as part of a Clean Energy Retraining Partnership grant received by Humboldt County and College of the Redwoods, in March, 2010.

The role of the GEC is to form a bridge between the emerging green industries looking for trained workers and the members of the workforce that are looking for employment in this field. Both of these entities are often too busy to be able to plan ahead and position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities that are arising. We recognize that employers, educators, and prospective employees do not always have the same perspectives and priorities. One of the most important goals for organizing the Green Employers Council will be to bring these three groups together to develop a shared vision and understanding of what each must do to seize the opportunities of the emerging green economy.

The primary responsibilities of the Council are to:

1. Prepare a Strategic Action Plan that includes:
 - a. Documentation of the general market trends as well as specific details about local projects and industries that are likely to develop over next five years.
 - b. Identification of the skill sets and knowledge base (trainings and certifications) that will be required to meet demands of green projects and industries.
 - c. Identification of strategic partners (public and private sector) that will assist in and benefit from workforce development activities.
 - d. Lay out course of action: present a schedule that includes educational/certification programs, work readiness trainings, project development, and identify funding sources for implementation of projects that will put trainees to work.
2. Facilitate collaboration between the various industry clusters in our region, as well as set priorities and seek funding for development and implementation of projects.

Other initiatives of the GEC include:

1. Coordinate expertise and resource development for financing green projects in the region;
2. Build a network of organizations and companies likely to provide employment for entry-level green collar workers;
3. Provide a platform for employers and prospective employees to meet each other and work on developing the next generation green workforce;
4. Provide leadership for future trends in the green industry cluster development in the region;
5. Cooperate with the Prosperity Network for green business start-up, retention, expansion, and attraction;
6. Secure finance expertise to access capital for green innovation and industry projects;
7. Strong online tools to facilitate the above functions;

8. Serve as this region's conduit of information about state and national green business trends;
9. Participate in Plan It Green's annual Building Green Communities conferences and Green Business Luncheons;
10. Facilitate a quarterly meeting with Council members;
11. Provide a resource library and resource referral; and
12. Prepare an annual state of the region report.

The GEC recruited members from businesses and non-profit organizations specializing in energy efficiency and weatherization, agriculture and food systems, environmental resources, engineering, construction, niche manufacturing, recycling, and renewable energy generation (e.g. solar, wind, hydroelectric, biomass, etc).

The GEC completed a series of public meetings to gather input for the Strategic Action Plan and to identify common barriers and economic development initiatives that would benefit multiple industry clusters that have been identified in Humboldt County. Attachment A (Visions/Goals/Strategies) documents these findings.

In 2007, the County Economic Development Division completed a project known as the Targets of Opportunity. The industry clusters identified through that study were:

- Diversified Health Care
- Building and Systems Construction and Maintenance
- Specialty Agriculture, Food, and Beverages
- Investment Support Services
- Management and Innovation Services
- Niche Manufacturing

The County is revisiting and revising that study through a State Workforce Investment Board-funded Regional Industry Clusters of Opportunity grant. The asked that the GEC narrow the scope of some of the initial meetings to focus on the Building and Systems Construction and Maintenance. The outcome of those meeting are presented in Attachment B (Report Out From GEC/RICO Meetings).