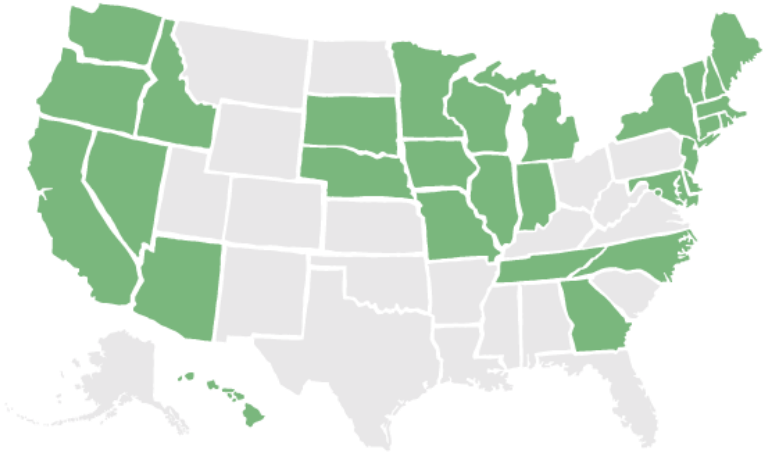
Energy Job Market Moving to Alternative Energy Sources

Despite changes to federal, state and local energy incentives and policies the clean energy economy remains a big source of jobs – approaching 4 million across the country – with wind and solar outpacing all other energy related jobs.

You might ask:

What is driving this clean energy job growth? The three major drivers are (1) dropping technology costs, (2) more demand for clean energy and efficiency technology, and (3) supportive policies, incentives, and investments.

What kind of jobs are we talking about? It includes a wide range of well-paying jobs – such as; installation of solar panels, wind turbines, auditing energy efficiency, development of electric vehicles, and soon to follow will be maintenance and repair of these new energy sources.



The District of Columbia and the states illustrated in "green" (30) are where wind and solar jobs are outpacing the jobs for gas, coal, and nuclear.

The renewable energy sector employs ~777,000 people, about the same as telecommunications.

The most rapid energy job growth has come from the solar and wind sectors, which rose by 24.5% and 16%, respectively.

Currently coal employs ~160,000 job across the country less than 25% of the renewable energy industry.

Another factor is the renewed emphasis on energy storage. The utilities are starting to see the need to support their renewables with something other than natural gas, coal, or nuclear. Energy storage via battery is the largest contributor but we are also seeing other means of storage, from pumped storage to air storage. Jobs in this area have surged and now approach 100,000 jobs in total.

In addition, movement to update and upgrade our electrical grid has created new jobs, as well – currently around 70,000 in total.

Both areas - energy storage and the electrical grid - are expected to continue to increase as more and more renewable energy sources are installed.

You may not know this …. But energy efficiency jobs make up most of the U.S. clean energy workforce – at least 2.2 million workers. In addition, these jobs cross over into other industries, such as; construction and the fossil fuel industry. Even in the states where the fossil fuel industries are king – for example - Kentucky has an estimated 24,000 workers in energy efficiency, compared with about 12,200 in coal.

They cover a range of work across industries – mostly construction jobs installing energy-efficient equipment.

Even in states with major fossil fuel industries, energy efficiency employment rivals oil, gas and coal. Kentucky, for example, has an estimated 24,000 workers in energy efficiency, compared with about 12,200 in coal.

Although, the outlook for some sectors – particularly solar – has started to slow. We are still seeing strong support for the clean energy economy. New technology is gaining momentum as solutions for today's energy problems, and innovative collaborations between the private and public sectors still point to more well-paying, local jobs to come.