Commerce Energy Division Workforce Development Updates

Presentation to the Clean Energy Workforce Advisory Committee (CETWAC)

Stephanie Scott (she/her)

SENIOR ENERGY POLICY SPECIALIST,
CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE

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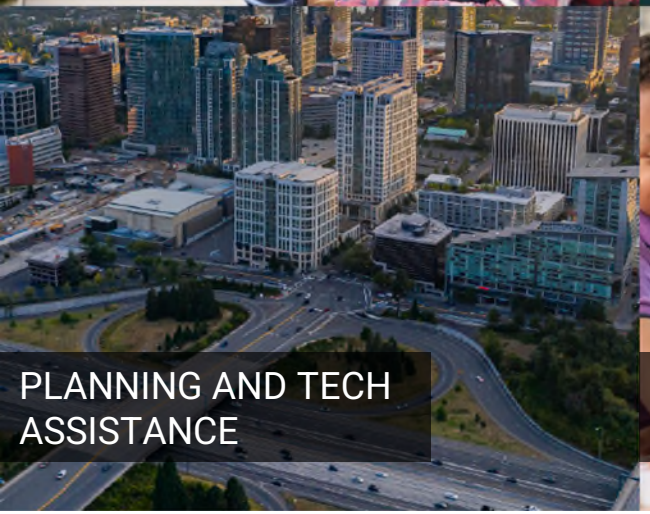
Washington State Department of Commerce

We strengthen communities



Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

Agenda

- Comprehensive Climate Action Plan Update
- Buy Clean and Buy Fair Low-carbon Manufacturing Plan
- Electrical Transmission Workforce Study Overview

CCAP Updates

Visit https://waclimatepartnership.org and subscribe for updates!

CCAP workforce planning analysis section

- Informed by insights from
  - CETWAC
  - CCAP workforce workgroup
  - CCAP Advisory Committee
  - Public engagement
  - Existing workforce studies
- Leveraged ESD-prepared data from the CETWAC report

Inventory of existing programs

- Registered Apprenticeship Programs
  - Workforce plan appendix lists all
- Authorized Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
  - Workforce plan appendix lists all
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
  - Pacific Northwest Center of Excellence for Clean Energy
  - Workforce plan appendix lists community college programs
- Public and private universities

Key cross-sector recommendation categories

1. Advance equity and environmental justice in workforce development
2. Balance workforce development efforts across geography, sectors, and employer types
3. Expand training capacity for emerging and transition sectors
4. Strengthen Registered Apprenticeships and Career & Technical Education (CTE) Pathways
5. Strengthen coordination and collaboration

1. Advance equity and environmental justice in workforce development

- Facilitate community-led planning and incorporate the HEAL Act's framework to ensure workforce policies and environmental justice initiatives align and benefit overburdened communities.
- Fund wraparound services including transportation, childcare, housing, tool and equipment purchase, application fee reimbursement and other support needs.
- Support connections and collaboration between community-based organizations, by-and-for organizations, recognized pre-apprenticeship programs, career and technical education (CTE) programs and other career preparatory programs with relevant paid-training and other next-step training providers such as registered apprenticeship programs and other postsecondary education.

2. Balance workforce development efforts across geography and sectors

- Ensure and fund equitable distribution of education, training and job opportunities with targeted investments in rural, Tribal and underserved communities. This includes incorporating disaggregated data to track progress in areas most impacted by pollution and systemic inequities.
- Ensure and fund comprehensive and inclusive training infrastructure. • Support both unionized and small contractors, through targeted policies and inclusive grant criteria (e.g., apprentice utilization, community benefits and labor agreements and Office of Minority & Women's Business Enterprises partnerships in state-funded programs).
- Increase targeted investments in CTE and postsecondary career pathways, especially in regions with below-average educational attainment and earnings.
- Encourage career awareness at the K–12 level, using real-life worker stories and hands on learning to attract a diverse talent pipeline.

3. Expand training capacity for emerging and transition sectors

- Scale training for emerging sectors including fusion, hydrogen, advanced nuclear, geothermal, as well as changes and advancements in sectors such as automotive repair and maintenance, manufacturing, and the building and construction trades. Fund investment in faculty and trainer development, new curricula and training equipment aligned with CCAP goals and emerging technologies.
- Leverage transferable skills and develop upskilling and cross training initiatives for fossil fuel industry workers, leveraging findings from the Oil Refinery Economic Impact Analysis
- Prioritize incumbent worker training and retraining opportunities

4. Strengthen Registered Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education Pathways

- Support the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council's work to diversify registered apprenticeship programs
- Ensure connection and collaboration between pre-apprenticeship programs and registered apprenticeship programs
- Promote apprentice utilization requirements on public works projects and prioritize technical assistance to help contractors meet apprentice utilization requirements commitments statewide.
- Leverage state and federally funded programs to embed apprentice utilization and other job training requirements into project delivery.

5. Strengthen coordination and collaboration

- Continue developing the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Council (CETWAC) as the convenor of labor, business, education, and community partners to align policy recommendations with economic realities, workforce forecasts and state and federal statutory requirements.
- Support leadership of the U.S. Climate Alliance's Governors' Climate-Ready Workforce Initiative, including three sector-specific cohorts focused on: clean energy, fuels and technologies; clean buildings and industries; and resilient communities and lands.
- Engage in other national, state and regional initiatives to build workforce capacity, including the National Association of State Energy Officials, International Economic Development Council and regional sector-specific public private partnerships.
- Invest in labor market intelligence and sector-specific workforce planning in coordination with Local Workforce Development Boards, Career Connect Washington, the Pacific Northwest Center of Excellence for Clean Energy, and public private partnerships.

Buy Clean and Buy Fair
Low-carbon manufacturing plan

Buy Clean and Buy Fair Low-carbon Manufacturing Plan

- The BCBF Low-carbon Manufacturing Plan is now available
- The BCBF Technical Work Group supports ongoing collaboration and report development and includes partners from manufacturing businesses, labor unions, environmental groups, government agencies, and architecture, engineering, and construction professionals

BCBF Workforce Recommendations

- Expand workforce reporting under RCW 39.116
- Invest in career and technical education (CTE) programs tailored to low-carbon materials production and installation
- Fund state-certified apprenticeships and joint labor-management training programs for clean materials industries
- Support childcare and transportation grants to improve job access and retention in low-carbon manufacturing careers

September 2026 Report

- An upcoming report will also include some recommendations to support workforce data collection
- Team is currently working to:
  - Better understand the availability of workforce and working conditions data for covered industries (wages, benefits, safety records)
  - Engage suppliers in voluntary reporting of workforce data
  - Identify industry-led efforts related to workforce standards and best practices

Electrical Transmission Workforce Study

Why we are here

Why this matters now

- Growing electricity demand and aging infrastructure
- 2045 clean energy requirements
- Meeting energy reliability, affordability, and climate goals requires a significantly larger skilled workforce

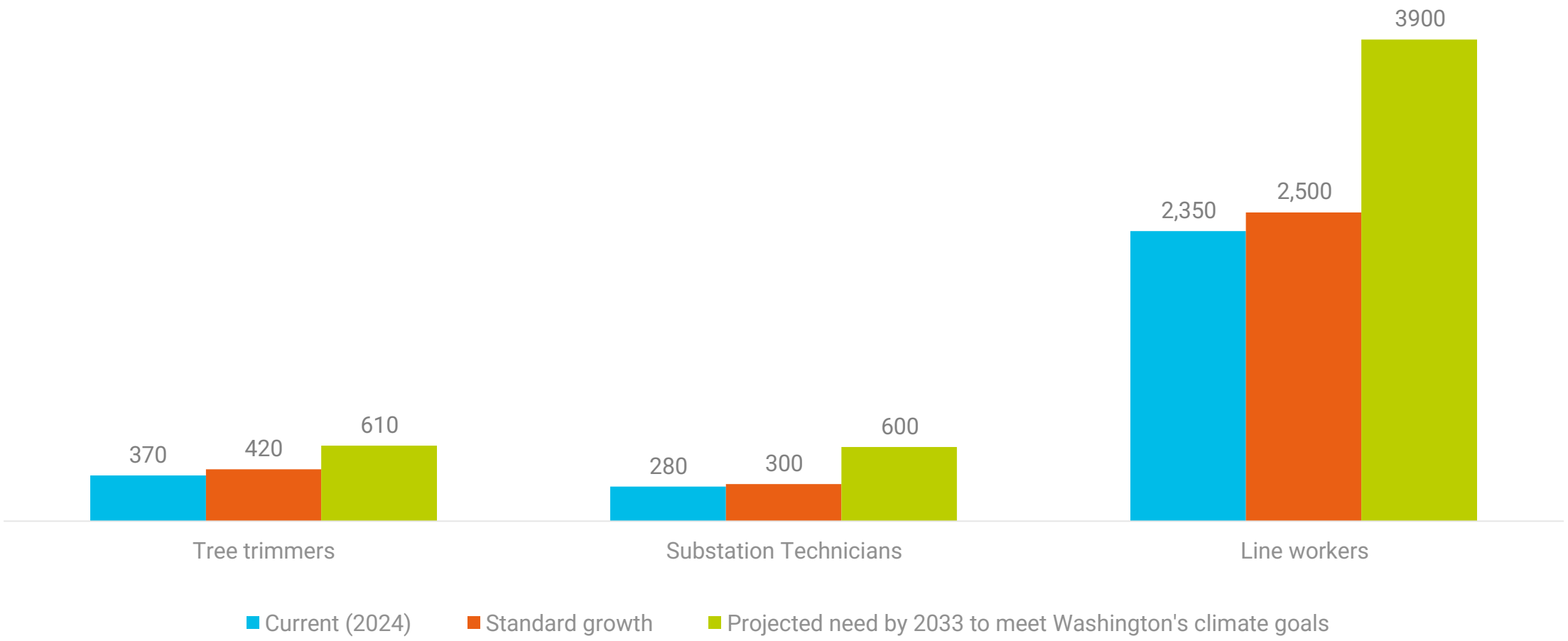
Workforce Study Proviso

- Workgroup: Labor and utility leaders
- Workforce study
- Report in review, anticipated early 2026

Commerce's role

- Trusted convener
- Most of the report recommendations would be implemented by other agencies, utilities, and labor partners

Current and projected workforce demand



Active projects needed to train apprentices

Transmission projects create job training pathways

- Apprenticeship requires hands-on training on large, complex projects
- Lack of major transmission build slows completion of on-the-job hours and limits the number of apprentices in the training pipeline
- Retirements will result in significant loss of knowledge and skill
- If we don’t ramp up training now, we may need out-of-state workers to meet future demand

Expanding and diversifying career pathways

Make training more accessible

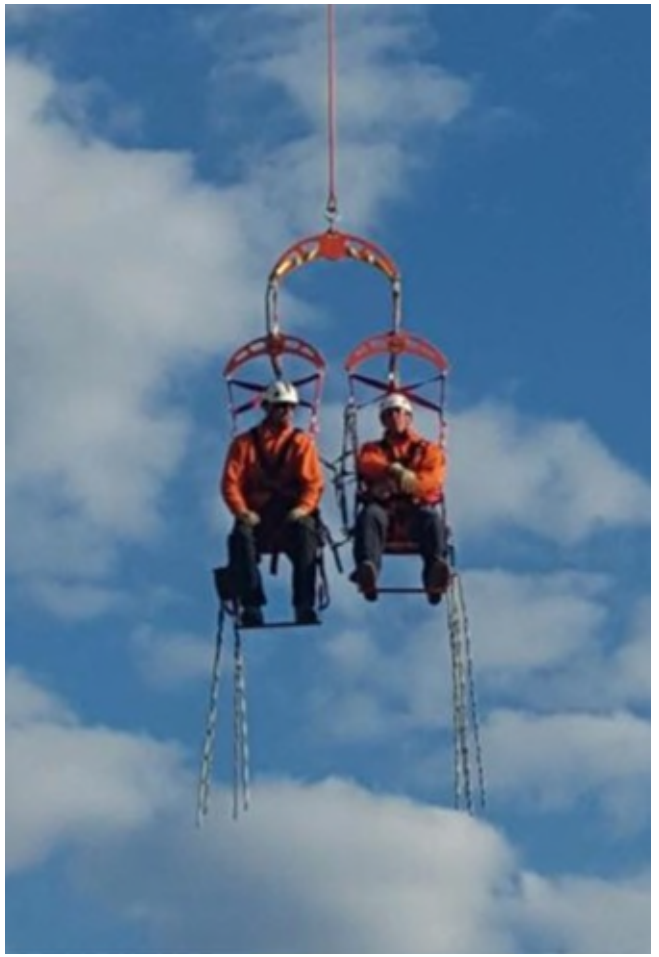
- Increase apprenticeship spots through active projects
- Subsidize utility-specific Commercial Driver License (CDL) training
- Increase funding for pre-apprenticeship scholarships and wraparound support services
  - VOLTA
  - Clover Park Technical College Line Worker and Arboricultural Program

Address systemic barriers

- Increase targeted scholarships and outreach campaigns for marginalized communities to attend pre-apprenticeship programs
- Fund a program to help highly qualified marginalized applicants attend line school as a cohort
- Fund wraparound support to address barriers during pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship (gear, travel, child care, lost wages during pre-apprenticeship)
  - Native American Apprenticeship Assistance Program (HB 2019, RCW 49.04)
  - L&I grant program for wraparound support services (RCW 49.04.270)

Key considerations: What's needed now

- Active transmission projects with Project Labor Agreements that include and enforce apprentice utilization requirements
- Diverse, supported training pipelines essential for long-term workforce capacity and economic justice
- Collaboration between utilities, labor, apprenticeship and other education and training partners, and state agencies



Questions?

Thank you!

Washington State Department of Commerce

www.commerce.wa.gov

Stephanie Scott (she/her)

SENIOR ENERGY POLICY SPECIALIST, CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE

Stephanie.Scott@commerce.wa.gov

206.485.5961

Electrical Transmission Workforce Workgroup

Labor representatives:

- Byron Allen, IBEW 483
- Travis Eri, IBEW 125
- Will Power, IBEW 77
- John Traynor, WA State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Utility representatives:

- Casey Raab, Grant PUD
- Amanda Bowman, Snohomish PUD
- Jeremy Gall, Avista
- Maggie Douglas, Puget Sound Energy