CLEAN ENERGY TECHNOLOGY WORKFORCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CETWAC)

March 19, 2026 | 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | Meeting No. 18

Meeting Summary: CETWAC Advisory Committee
Presiding: Todd Mitchell (Co-Chair)
Presenters: Monica Brummer, Director, Center of Excellence for Clean Energy, and Stephanie Scott, Senior Clean Energy Specialist, Department of Commerce

This meeting of the Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee (CETWAC) focused on legislative updates and budget issues from the recent legislative session along with updates from the Center of Excellence on Clean Energy and the Washington Department of Commerce. The session included the formal approval of the January meeting minutes and a formal presentation by Stephanie Scott covering the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP), the Buy Clean and Buy Fair Low Carbon Manufacturing Plan, and an update on the yet to be released Electrical Transmission Workforce Study, (pending since the spring of 2024).

Key Discussion Points

Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

- **Status:** A 400-page plan has been submitted to the EPA; a public virtual rollout is pending.
- **Workforce Integration:** The plan includes workforce analysis leveraging the CETWAC legislative report and research specifically the Employment Security Department (ESD) data.
- **Recommendation Categories:**
  - Advancing equity and environmental justice.
  - Balancing efforts across geography and employer types.
  - Expanding training capacity for emerging sectors.
  - Strengthening registered apprenticeships and CTE pathways.
  - Enhancing cross-agency coordination.

Buy Clean and Buy Fair (HB 1282)

- **Legislative Mandate:** Requires disclosure of environmental and workforce data (wages, benefits, safety) for concrete, wood, and steel used in large state projects (>50k sq. ft.).
- **Workforce Focus:** Promotes job quality through public procurement and supports CTE programs tailored to low-carbon manufacturing.
- **Next Steps:** A report focused on workforce data collection and industry standards is due in September 2026.

Electrical Transmission Workforce Study

- **The Challenge:** Meeting 2045 goals requires a massive grid build-out while the current workforce is aging and in short supply.

- **Demand Scenarios:**
  - **Status Quo:** Minimal growth, maintainable by current systems.
  - **Clean Energy Target:** Requires a **5x to 10x increase** in growth, including over 1,500 new line workers and hundreds of technicians.
- **Critical Need for "Active Projects":** Stephanie Scott emphasized that these trades require 6,000–8,000 hours of hands-on experience on energized lines. Without active construction projects, the apprenticeship pipeline stalls because skills cannot be taught in a classroom alone.
- **Risk of Inaction:** Failure to build a local pipeline of electrification jobs, specifically lineworkers, tree trimmers and substation operators may force reliance on out-of-state workers who may be less familiar with Washington's specific climate or safety regulations.
- **Apprenticeship as Infrastructure:** Success in training the next generation of line workers and technicians is tethered to a steady flow of "active transmission projects." Without live work, apprentices cannot complete the 6,000–8,000 hours of on-the-job training required for certification.
- **Barriers to Entry:** The cost of obtaining a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) - roughly $5,000 - and the high tuition for out-of-state line schools (e.g., Volta at $8,500) remain significant hurdles for prospective Washington lineworkers.
- **Diversity and Equity:** The current workforce remains predominantly white and male. Recommendations include targeted scholarships, cohort-based "prep" programs, and expanded wraparound services (childcare, travel, gear).
- **Safety Standards:** A core theme of the study is the necessity of maintaining rigorous safety standards, which are best taught by local journey-level workers familiar with Washington's specific climate and regulatory environment.

CETWAC Research and Data Achievements

Ilene Munk, staff to the Advisory Committee, provided a legislative and organizational update, noting that while CETWAC has made significant strides in data gathering and policy influence, the committee is facing a funding sunset on June 30th. The group discussed how to preserve research and transition priorities to other state bodies, such as the Environmental Justice Council. An After-Action Report, listing accomplishments, and hurdles will be provided at the May meeting, which is expected to include recommendations for sharing the CETWAC research with other state agency partners.

- **Defining "Clean Energy":** The committee adopted Department of Energy definitions to remain competitive for federal grants, in addition to incorporating maritime and aerospace sectors which are often overlooked in federal definitions of clean energy. Washington's unique position in the maritime and aerospace fields were included in the ESD workforce analysis because of the number of workers in Washington in each field.
- **Workforce Demographics:** Research revealed that the clean energy sector is among the least diverse in the state.
- **Worker Priorities:** Surveys conducted in 2025 demonstrate that workers prioritize health insurance over other benefits like paid time-off. Conversely, employers think the most important benefit for workers is time-off.
- **Transition to Retirement Feasibility Study:** The Workforce Board completed a study of the feasibility of providing a path to retirement for near-retirement workers to protect their health

insurance, and retirement benefits for those workers in the fossil fuels sector impacted by the state's climate policies. The object of the study was to determine the Agency which would house such a program and to model the program after the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, federal programs used since the 1980s. The number of workers likely impacted and the cost to establish such a program were included in the 2025 CETWAC report to the legislature.

Legislative and Funding Outlook

- **Funding Ended:** CETWAC was not funded for the upcoming year by the Legislature or Governor Ferguson. Operations will conclude on June 30th, with the final meeting scheduled for May.
- **Transition Planning:** Discussion centered on whether the Workforce Board, ESD or L&I could provide a "supply-demand timeline" to explain how long it takes to ramp up training once project funding is secured, ensuring future policymakers don't lose the committee's gained expertise.

Preservation of Research and Resources

- The May meeting will serve as an after-action report including accomplishments, and barriers. The committee was tasked with identifying external organizations that can inherit and utilize their research.

Clean Energy Center of Excellence

- State-Wide Impact: Monica Brummer confirmed that all 12 Centers of Excellence (including Construction and Energy) were cut from the state budget. Unless a gubernatorial veto occurs, operations cease on June 30.
- Institutional Loss: The cuts affect over $1.5 million in grants currently being managed by the Center of Excellence in Clean Energy, as well as the workforce leadership role for the regional Hydrogen Hub.
- Legacy Planning: To mitigate the loss, the Center is creating a "toolkit" for industry partners to facilitate direct communication with community college deans and faculty, bypassing the Center as a middleman.
- Website Longevity: The Center of Excellence for Clean Energy website remains a critical free resource for apprenticeships across five states. While hosting costs are low ($200/year), the loss of staff to maintain and update the data is a primary concern.

Hydrogen and Clean Energy Outlook

- Infrastructure Growth: Local transit authorities (Lewis County, TriMet, C-Tran) are expanding hydrogen fuel cell bus fleets. Fueling stations are expected to follow, providing work for pipefitters and plumbers.
- The Training Bottleneck: Manufacturers are reportedly two years behind on training. In California, buses are sitting idle because there are no qualified technicians to maintain them or drivers trained to operate them, leading to safety risks from self-teaching.
- Innovations: Updates were provided on the "H2 Skills" curriculum and an anaerobic digester project with WSU that turns dairy waste into green energy.

Participant Comments and Roles

- **Stephanie Scott (Senior Clean Energy Specialist, Commerce):**
  - Highlighted the promising in-state pre-apprenticeship program at Clover Park Technical College as a model for accessible training and cooperation between labor and education.
- **Ilene Munk (Workforce Board Staff):**
  - Expressed the importance of "tying up" existing research, particularly the demographics data, for use by groups like the Environmental Justice Council, or other groups interested in promoting equity in the state.
  - Acknowledged the bad luck regarding federal and state funding shifts but emphasized the long-term utility of the committee's work.

- **Todd Mitchell (Co-Chair):** Emphasized the importance of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) to ensure local workers—rather than out-of-state contractors—benefit from Washington's transition.
  - Suggested that the committee focus its final months on explaining the "one-year to five-year lookout" for workforce recruitment and training.

- **Todd Mitchell (Co-Chair):** Acknowledged the "sad time" for the centers, noting their long history of "good work" since their creation. He called for the committee to think critically about how to utilize the remaining staff time before the June sunset.

Next Steps & Resources

- **Final Report:** Electrical Transmission Workforce Study – will it be released?
- **Prioritization:** Staff to focus on updating demographic research and policy recommendations before the June 30th sunset.
- **Final Meeting:** CETWAC will convene for its last formal meeting on May 21 to discuss an orderly closure of the program.
- **Resource Link**: Get Into Energy (CEWD) – Free "Energy Industry Fundamentals 2.0" modules for students, workers, and educators.
- **Upcoming Meeting**: Hydrogen workforce meeting scheduled for April 28 at Centralia College.
- **Final Center of Excellence Advisory Board meeting**: Scheduled for May 1 at the PSE Training Center.
- **CETWAC Closing**: Members asked to submit ideas for final projects or information requests to staff before the committee dissolves.