
Executive Summary

The American Jobs Project was borne of two tough problems: loss of middle-class jobs in America and congressional paralysis. It seeks to address these problems by taking advantage of one of the biggest market opportunities of our era—the advanced energy sector—and to do so at the state, not the federal, level. Policymakers who leverage the unique strategic advantages of their state to grow localized sectors of interconnected companies and institutions are poised to create quality jobs.

Florida already has a strong foundation in the advanced energy sector, and is well positioned to benefit further as demand for alternative energy products increases. The state's \$6.2 billion advanced energy economy currently contains 14,000 businesses employing more than 130,000 Floridians.^{11,12} Florida's public universities, research facilities, and its skilled labor force present opportunities for the state to further serve growing regional, national, and global markets and create even more good-paying jobs for its residents. Extensive research and more than forty interviews with local stakeholders and experts in Florida have resulted in identifying two economic sectors that show particular promise: solar and biofuels.

The advanced energy industry can play a significant role in Florida's future economic development. By emphasizing technological innovation in the solar and biofuel sectors, Florida will enable its companies to take advantage of market opportunities across the globe. Florida's leaders can enact enabling policies to expand the solar and biofuel industries and help local businesses innovate, grow, and outcompete national and global competitors. Indeed, with the right policies, Florida can support as many as 98,500 jobs annually through 2030.

This project serves as a research-based guide for state and local leaders who seek to develop smart policies focused on leveraging Florida's resources to create skilled, good-paying jobs. Concerted effort at the state and local levels can create an environment that attracts advanced energy businesses to take root in Florida. Employees in the advanced energy sector will spend their earnings in the local economy at grocery stores and restaurants, and those local establishments will need to hire more employees to satisfy demand. This creates a multiplier effect throughout Florida's economy, where a single dollar spent in a community circulates through local businesses and their employees numerous times.



Summary of Policy Recommendations

The analysis presented in this report culminates in four thematic sets of recommendations for Florida's leaders. Each set of recommendations identifies opportunities for barrier removal and future growth opportunities in the solar and biofuels sectors. While the recommendations are intended to be complementary and would be powerful if adopted as a package, each can also be viewed as a stand-alone option.

Solar Technology

Support the Development of Community Solar Projects: Enabling community solar by allowing multiple subscribers to a shared, utility-provided solar array and also allowing local communities to organize shared projects with the assistance of third-party financing.

Improve Net Metering for Solar Projects: Authorizing aggregate, virtual, and community net metering in an effort to extend the benefits of net metering to Floridians who are currently excluded from net metering. Ensuring customers continue to receive equitable and transparent net metering charges through safe harbor provisions. Net metering allows customers to sell excess energy back to the grid.

Allow Third-Party Sales of Electricity: Removing restrictions on third-party financing models would enable consumer choice, expand the Florida solar market, and capitalize on the state's tremendous solar potential.

Offer a Green Source Rider Program: Connecting large, energy-intensive companies with renewable energy without shifting costs to other ratepayers. Private sector demand for renewable energy is clear: fifty-one Fortune 500 companies have signed a declaration demanding access to clean energy.

Create an Online Crowdfunding Platform to Support School Solar Projects: Supporting solar projects for schools and community centers by creating an online crowdfunding platform to pool public donations.

Biofuels

Create the Florida Biofuels Information Center: Overcoming unfamiliarity of biofuels by establishing a resource that aggregates information on how to enter the biofuels industry into one easy-to-use portal. The information center can use online resources, trainings, and conferences to educate stakeholders on the economic benefits of biofuels.

Enhance Florida's Biofuel Industry Through Foreign Direct Investment: Attracting foreign companies to boost advanced biofuel investments within Florida. Foreign investors can bring manufacturing expertise and resources that are currently lacking in the state's biofuels economy.

Establish a Biofuel Retailer Tax Credit: Encouraging more flex fuel retailers to open businesses in Florida by offering a tax credit to overcome high overhead costs of installation. Similar credits in other states have resulted in increased sales of flex fuels.

Encourage Public Alternative Fuel Vehicle Fleets Through Performance Contracts: Encouraging local and state governments to use performance contracting models, commonly known as Energy Service Companies (ESCOs), to upgrade public fleets to use alternative fuels. Municipalities around the country have decreased costs by upgrading public fleets through ESCOs.

Innovation Ecosystem and Access to Capital

Create a University Research and Development Tax Credit: Incentivizing businesses to invest in local university-level research and development through refundable and transferrable tax credits.

Establish the Breakthrough Research Institute for Biofuel Technology: Creating a next-generation biofuel research institute that strategically targets federal research dollars.

Workforce Development

Improve Industry-Wide Recognition and Participation With Apprenticeships: Providing financial incentives for companies that hire and train apprentices; working directly with employers to tailor apprenticeship requirements, wages, and associate curricula to specific technical needs; and integrating apprenticeship programs with stackable credentials.

Expand Early College Programs to Improve STEM Education: Increasing the number of early college programs available throughout the state to better prepare students for STEM careers.

