
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 clusters of interconnected companies and institutions are poised to create quality jobs.

Colorado is well-positioned to benefit from the growing demand for advanced energy given the state's strengths in advanced manufacturing and engineering, its leading universities and research facilities, and its skilled labor force. Opportunities to leverage this momentum to further serve growing regional, national, and global markets offer real benefits for Colorado's economy and good-paying jobs for the state's residents.

Extensive research and more than 100 interviews with local stakeholders and experts in Colorado have resulted in identifying two economic sectors that show particular promise: solar and wind energy.

There are several barriers hindering Colorado's advanced energy industries and preventing supply chains from reaching their full potential. Colorado must address these roadblocks to grow the state's advanced energy sectors and realize economic gains. To take full advantage of these opportunities, Colorado's policymakers can enact policies to increase demand for solar and wind technology and to help the state's businesses grow, innovate, and outcompete regional, national, and global competitors. Indeed, with the right policies, Colorado's solar and wind energy industries can support up to 13,000 jobs annually in these two clusters.

This project serves as a research-based roadmap for state and local leaders who seek to develop smart policies focused on leveraging the state's resources to create skilled, good-paying jobs. Concerted effort at the state and local levels can create an environment that attracts new companies and grows existing companies headquartered in Colorado. 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 Colorado'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 Colorado's leaders. Each set of recommendations identifies opportunities for barrier removal and future growth in the solar and wind 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

Create an Energy Storage Mandate: Establishing a market for energy storage technologies to allow for continued integration of renewable energy sources.

Support the Development of Residential PACE Programs: Expanding use of residential PACE by instituting a loan-loss reserve program and a PACE toolkit. PACE financing mitigates the high upfront cost of solar for customers by allowing property owners to finance investments in solar panels with a loan that is repaid through their property tax bill.

Enable Group Solar Purchasing: Increasing access to solar by enabling communities to purchase greater quantities of solar panels at discounted group rates.

Reduce Barriers to Community Solar: Establishing annual community solar goals, developing public and private sector financing for low-income communities, and extending community solar legislation to municipal utilities and rural electric cooperatives to increase access to community solar.

Create Safe Harbors in Net Energy Metering: Ensuring customers continue to receive equitable and transparent net metering charges. Net metering allows customers to sell excess energy back to the grid.

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

Wind Technology

Encourage Small Wind Turbine Manufacturing and Deployment: Instituting a small wind tax credit, enabling community wind projects, restoring the anemometer loan program, and creating an export tax credit for qualified small- to medium-sized industries to strengthen the small wind manufacturing

sector by boosting in-state demand for small wind turbines and encouraging exports of small wind turbines.

Create an Anchor Company Tax Credit: Encouraging more wind turbine component suppliers to locate in Colorado by offering a tax credit to companies that recruit them.

Create a Consolidated Balancing Authority: Establishing a unified balancing authority to enable Colorado to efficiently pool energy resources, decrease balancing costs, and allow the state to export electricity.

Modernize Transport Pathways to Improve Wind Turbine Export: Upgrading roadways and encouraging use of rail to transport large goods to allow Colorado to manufacture and export turbines to nearby markets.

Innovation Ecosystem and Access to Capital

Facilitate New Partnerships Within the Energy Innovation Ecosystem and Set Statewide Goals: Proactively aligning university and research partnerships to achieve strategic R&D and funding goals.

Create an Advanced Energy Equity Crowdfunding Hub: Building on Colorado's Crowdfunding Act by streamlining investor access through an online platform.

Workforce Development

Enhance Workforce Training Opportunities Through Dual Enrollment Programs: Establishing industry-specific early colleges and dual enrollment programs to allow high school students to simultaneously earn a high school degree and earn credits for an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Create and Improve Pathways for Veterans to Transition to Advanced Energy Jobs: Establishing programs for veterans that help them transition into the advanced energy workforce by connecting veterans to employers, translating military experience on resumes, and encouraging military recruitment days.

Establish Incentives to Promote Apprenticeships in Advanced Energy Industries: Offering incentives and guidance for businesses to establish apprenticeships to increase the number of statewide apprenticeships, as seen in South Carolina's successful program.

