The Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area's "Green" Sector: Current Scale and Future Possibilities

Executive Summary

As part of an effort to stimulate a greener economy and foster well-paid green collar jobs, this pilot report takes first steps toward identifying the size and scope of, as well as trends and potentials in, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)'s[1] "green" sector. For this report's purposes, an industry, employer, and/or occupation is considered "green" if it improves, or supports the improvement of, a given industry's or activity's negative anthropogenic environmental impacts compared to the status quo in the given industry or activity.

Rationale

The environmental goods and services industry (green sector) is sizeable and growing. Nationally in 2003 and 2004 it accounted for an estimated $211 - $340 billion. In 2006, renewable energy and energy efficiency supported nearly 8.5 million jobs nationwide. Albuquerque is well suited to compete in the green economy by incorporating the environment into the city's planning and future economic growth. Albuquerque's technology resources are strong; political will is demonstrated and committed; and the business climate is one of the nation's best.

Preliminary findings[2]

Preliminary results indicate that Albuquerque's green economy consists of no less than 314 companies and institutions across 137 NAICS six-digit industry sectors. The number of green sector employees is between approximately 6,850 and 14,650 people. The sectors providing the largest number of green jobs are public service and professional, scientific, and technical services, accounting for over half of Albuquerque MSA's green jobs.

Several industries with a significant green presence or potential are projected to either grow or remain constant in the next 6-8 years. These include construction, including energy efficiency and sustainable construction and renovation; professional, scientific services, and technical services, including a range of consulting activities; and green manufacturing, including renewable energy products.

-The construction industry is projected to grow 20.4% between 2004 and 2014. At present the industry consists of 48 establishments and employs between 700 and 1,600 people.

-The professional, scientific, and technical services industry accounts for the most private sector employment, between approximately 1,450 and 3,300 people. The 85 companies engaged in green activities comprise at least 2.9% of the overall industry, which is projected to grow 17.4% between 2004 and 2014

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[1] The Albuquerque MSA includes Bernalillo, Torrance, Sandoval, and Valencia counties.

[2] For discussion of the limitations the data and results, refer to footnotes 15 and 18 in the main report.

-Green manufacturing consists of at least 18 establishments that employ between 380 and 835 people. Most of these establishments are involved in activities that produce solar energy generation products. Interestingly, despite Intel layoffs that affected employment in computer and electronic manufacturing, employment in this subsector is likely to remain fairly stable because of gains forecast due to Schott Solar.

Selected Recommendations

-Ideally, a green rating system of business activity, similar to LEED[3] ratings (i.e. silver, gold, platinum) for construction projects, should be developed.

-A comprehensive systems perspective for simultaneously stimulating the green economy and improving environmental conditions should be adopted.

-Support a complete green job pipeline, including not just job training, but structures and programs that make job training feasible to populations with unique needs.

-Link green-collar job goals to existing and upcoming projects by incorporating green jobs language and tie-ins to workforce training programs into project RFPs.

-The New Mexico Climate Change Advisory Group's suggestions for reducing greenhouse gases includes many cost effective solutions that could potentially dovetail with job training programs

-Further study is needed to understand more thoroughly Albuquerque's green economy and that of New Mexico statewide.

Conclusions

Albuquerque is well suited to capitalize on the surge in green industry by strengthening its green collar workforce through the development of a comprehensive "green pipeline." Building a competitive and equitable green economy means investing in workers educated beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. It also includes adapting green material to preexisting training programs and curriculum at area educational institutions, disseminating information in a targeted and effective manner, and increasing availability and visibility of paths to access green training opportunities.

In the long term, shifting from an ethos of reducing "negative anthropogenic impacts," of trying to only be "less bad," to an ethos of promoting positive anthropogenic impacts that improve environmental function where it has been damaged, would be ideal. Integrating with (and capitalizing on) natural cycles and processes will make Albuquerque not only a leader in the green economy, but a leading think-tank for cutting edge socio-environmental ideas and initiatives.

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[3] Stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, which is a third-party certification program affiliated with the U.S. Green Building Council that provides a means of assessing a building's environmentally sound attributes.