

THE CALIFORNIA HIGH ROAD: A ROAD MAP TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Although California has implemented progressive policies and innovative solutions to adapt to and mitigate climate impacts on economic growth, public health, and ecosystems, the damaging effects continue. The unequal impact of climate change—the “climate gap”—has profound consequences on health and economic outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

California’s climate agenda is aligned with a vision of shared prosperity, recognizing that we can achieve both carbon reduction and economic growth. The approach prioritizes firms that compete on the basis of quality services and products, investment in skills training, reduction of inequities experienced by the most vulnerable communities, and creation of quality jobs tied to local-hire pipelines that address industry mitigation and adaptation strategies to transition to a carbon-neutral economy. The goal is to create a sustainable and resilient environment, community, and a carbon-neutral economy for all.

High road training partnerships (HRTPs) are raising industry standards by creating partnerships that connect workers and communities to safer, healthier, and more highly skilled jobs. HRTPs increase the capacity of firms and workers to adapt and compete by addressing the issues that emerge as industries face climate challenges.

WHAT IS CLIMATE RESILIENCE?

As we transition to a carbon-neutral economy, prioritizing job quality and promoting equity in access, training, and retention are imperative to procuring the critical skills industries need to address climate change and environmental sustainability. To achieve economically and environmentally resilient communities, we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities, and connect climate-change reduction to high road workforce practices.

CREATING A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM THAT ENSURES CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Quality Jobs

Employers provide quality jobs that include family-sustaining wages, pensions, health benefits, and career pathways for workers with environmental sustainability skills. Customized training that aligns climate awareness with industry needs and prioritizes racial equity practices in a community context helps employers make workplaces safer and meet environmental sustainability standards that improve public health.

Regional Strategies

Employers, workers, and their representatives create and implement regional strategies to institutionalize sustainable practices that reduce the energy consumption, operational costs, and environmental footprint of their industries and improve public health, quality of life, and economic opportunity in California’s most vulnerable communities.

Disruption Responses

In the transition away from fossil fuels and other climate mitigation strategies, government and industry leaders anticipate and prevent negative consequences for workers and local communities.

Worker Safety

Green training includes the use of products and personal protective equipment that reduce harm to worker health and the environment. Training addresses environmental conditions, such as contamination in the workplace and community, and the use of harmful chemicals, to protect workers, reduce the risk of injuries and heat-related illnesses, and prevent fatalities and chronic health conditions.

Reduction Co-benefits

Because not every strategy yields both climate change reduction and public health benefits, government and industry leaders prioritize reducing greenhouse gasses in a manner that also reduces co-pollutants and fossil fuel consumption, an approach that benefits the communities most impacted by climate change.

ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUITIES

Economic Vulnerabilities

Warmer climates increase water and energy costs, making basic necessities more expensive. Low-income people spend as much as a quarter of their income on food, electricity, and water and cannot afford to invest in more energy-efficient appliances, utilities, and home improvements.

Health Impacts

Many low-income families are more exposed to toxic substances and heat-related health impacts like heat stroke, dehydration, and cardiovascular, respiratory, and other diseases because they are more likely to live in poor-quality and energy-inefficient housing and work in hazardous environments.

Geographic Vulnerabilities

Low-income families and people of color are more likely to live near natural hazards, transportation corridors, and other sources of pollutants. This exposure exacerbates preexisting health and economic conditions that often become chronic.

Sources: Equity Research Institute, United States Environmental Protection Agency, and Wikipedia

THE H RTP APPROACH CREATES AN ECOSYSTEM OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Workers

Workers most affected by climate change have access to quality jobs that improve their health and economic outcomes and are valued contributors to the environmental sustainability movement.

Employers

Employers adapt business practices to ameliorate the effects of climate change, reach their energy efficiency goals, and reduce their carbon footprint, energy consumption, and operating costs, thereby increasing the capacity of firms to compete in a rapidly evolving, carbon-constrained economy.

Worker Organizations

The transition to a low-carbon economy creates opportunities to lift industry standards, increase the number of green workers, and establish employment pipelines in communities experiencing job loss.

Communities

Public health improves as the carbon-neutral economy extends green practices beyond the workplace through worker knowledge-sharing of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.