OPTIONS FOR A NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE

Carol Zabin – UC Berkeley
Chris Benner – UC Davis
Chris Tilly – UCLA

July 21, 2010

Presentation to the California Energy Commission
Workshop: Clean Energy Jobs & the Growth of the Clean Energy Economy

Outline of the talk

- Methodology
- Why a National Center for the Clean Energy Workforce?
- 3 options
- Functions
- Structure
- Conclusions

Methodology

- Interviews (over 100) and websites
- Two communities
  - Clean energy
  - Workforce development

Why a National Center for the Clean Energy Workforce (NCCEW)?

- Importance of workforce issues
  - Future shortages or mismatch
  - Product quality
    - *Right now a lot of public dollars are going into solar, small and mid-scale wind. But the status and quality of installation is all over the map. The American public by and large doesn't believe that these technologies work, that they are ready at an industrial scale. To win that confidence, we have to have people who are in place who can reliably produce and install the technology. Massachusetts spent a lot on small wind, and most of the wind turbines are performing horribly. So certification and standard installation and quality control is huge.* – Mark Sinclair, CESA
  - Job quality, mobility, equity & access
  - Context: government resources
  - Focus: "mid-skill"
- NCCEW needed?

Three options: Option 1

- Option 1: Build the capacity of the workforce development community to maximize opportunities in clean energy sectors
  - What's needed
  - What works
  - Engage employers as well
- Disadvantages
  - Duplication
  - Reactive

Three options: Option 2

- Option 2: Rationalize the demand side of the clean energy labor market: quality assurance mechanisms, skill standards
  - Exploit leverage
  - Government interest (notably DoE)
- Disadvantages
  - Crowded field
  - Job quality, mobility, equity, access?

Three options: Option 3

- Option 3: Build the high road in clean energy sectors
  - "High road": commitment, skills, rewards
    - *"We need smart policies that will create the demand for workers that will create more domestic jobs in the US that are family-supporting. Society needs to go beyond energy policy and beyond workforce development policy."* – Jeremy Hays, Green for All
  - Work closely with both communities
    - Focus on skill standards and certification
    - Align with stackable, portable credentials
    - Explore other mechanisms to shape and coordinate supply and demand for product quality and job quality

→ Will focus on Option 3

Key functions of a NCCEW

- Research
- Clearinghouse and communications
- Technical assistance

Key function 1: Research

- Mainly aggregation, evaluation, dissemination
  - *"People are building the pieces, but haven't figured out if they connect or not. A center could do some of that mapping and collecting."* – Bob Giloth, Annie. E. Casey Foundation
- Map and forecast demand, likely shortages
- Map and evaluate:
  - Skill standards
    - 300 certifications for boiler operation
    - Solar installation: NABCEP, IBEW-NECA, Electronics Technicians Association, etc.
  - Clean energy agency leverage points
  - Training programs and curricula

Key function 2: Clearinghouse & communications

- Seed and broker broad discussions
  - Within the two constituencies
  - ***Between*** them
- On the demand side: focus on state & local government agencies, especially those with a clean energy mission
  - Key drivers
  - CEC contacts

Key function 3: Technical assistance

- Building on research and communications
  - *"A technical assistance function follows immediately from a dissemination function. I envision that folks at the local or regional level who learn about a best practice through the Center will immediately want to call and say, 'How can we do this here?'"* - Bruce Herman, New York State Department of Labor
- Targeted and sector-specific
  - Focus on building capacity to design, select, refine, implement, comply with skill & labor standards
  - Workforce development community
  - Clean energy agencies and employers
    - "Assisting the assisters"

Structure of a NCCEW: Consensus points

- Build cross-constituency partnerships
  - Government, industry, unions, educators/trainers, certifiers, researchers
- Not based in a single single existing institution
  - *"Avoid capture by any one institutional player. The players need enough self-interest to stay engaged, but without capturing. Workforce development is a fragmented world. No player has all of the pieces you want."* - Rick McGahey, Ford Foundation
  - Small decision-making board, large advisory board
- Networked, multi-locational structure
  - Virtual center

Structure: Two options for geographic scope and institutional home

- Option 1: Multi-state launch, convening selected states
  - Existing state network, ***or*** states with commitment to both clean energy and strong sector-based workforce policy
  - Greater national influence, resources
  - Would take more time, consultation; complex politics
- Institutional home
  - New non-profit
  - Existing multi-state organization (CESA, CSI, NGA, IREC, etc.)
  - Other nonprofits: Apollo Alliance, Green for All, Policy Link
  - University consortium
  - RFP process

Structure: Two options, continued

- Option 2: California launch
  - Easier, sure to meet CA needs
  - Adequate scale, substantial resources
    - Energy Regional Innovation Cluster proposal (L. Berkeley)
  - But the problems (and many solutions) are national
- Institutional home
  - As before: new non-profit, existing non-profit, RFP
  - Quasi-public
  - Joint Powers Authority
  - University-affiliated nonprofit

Conclusion

- Many choices!
- The value of Option 3
  - Promote high road strategies
    - High commitment, skill, rewards
    - Product quality, job quality
  - Focus especially on standards and certifications