



## Sightline Memorandum: Green Jobs Messaging Guide

**To:** Advocates for green jobs and clean energy investments

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**Subject:** Green Jobs Media Audit and Messaging Guide

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### INTRODUCTION

There is a buzz in the air about green jobs.

In part, the buzz has been created by an influx of new federal funding. The stimulus package, passed earlier this year, invests \$85 billion nationwide, and hundreds of millions in the Northwest, toward job-generating green initiatives—retrofitting buildings, upgrading public transit systems, and building an electrical grid that can better integrate renewable energy. Federal climate policy passed by the House, and pending before the Senate, would invest similar amounts each year for decades.

But while press coverage of green jobs has been largely favorable, many press accounts retain an underlying skepticism—particularly a belief that proponents have exaggerated the promise of a green collar workforce.

Momentum and public opinion is on the side of green-collar jobs, and in investments in a clean energy economy. But opponents have been outspoken and consistent. That means there's work to be done to counteract lingering skepticism and ensure that the buzz is perceived as more than mere hype. **To this end, clean energy and green jobs policy advocates' messages should reinforce both the reality of green-collar jobs in local communities and the economic benefits of policy and investments that create those jobs, acknowledging that obstacles may stand in the way but clearly illustrating the ways to overcome them.**

By analyzing news media coverage of green collar jobs in 2009 and reviewing existing research and expert communications, we identify best practices as well as the biggest messaging opportunities moving forward.

## MEDIA AUDIT AND ANALYSIS

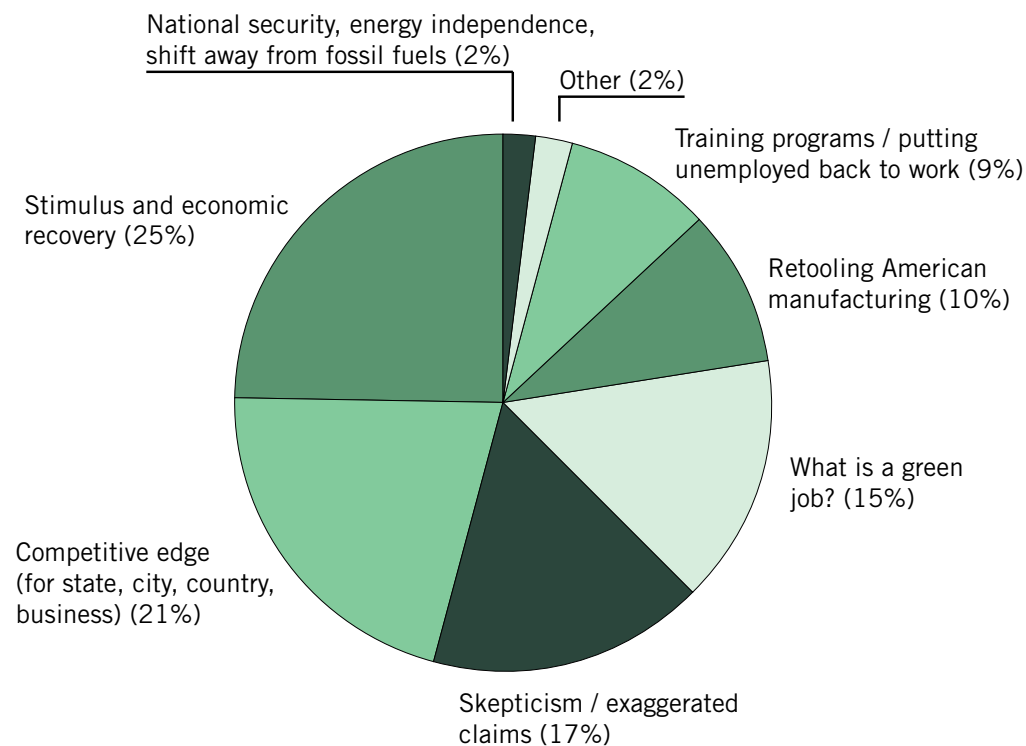
### Methodology

We reviewed 100 local and national mainstream newspaper articles, editorials, and broadcast transcripts from television and radio covering green jobs, identifying the most common messages and storylines. We identified the most prevalent “oppositional arguments” as well as messages employed by green jobs advocates in order to identify both the obstacles and best practices for communicating effectively about the benefits and opportunities in green jobs programs and investments. Our sample included local and national stories that appeared online between January 1 and August 31, 2009. (For a full list of sources and additional methodological information, see Appendix.)

### Overview of News Media Coverage—By the Numbers

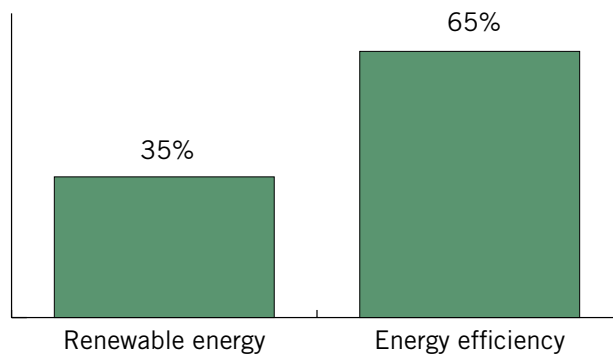
- ◆ **Main storylines.** A majority of green jobs storylines focused on stimulus dollars and potential economic recovery under Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and, to a lesser degree, as a result of pending federal climate and energy legislation. Other important storylines: green jobs and clean energy investment lead to a competitive edge, whether for a city, a state, a country, or a business; skepticism about exaggerated claims; and attempts to define “green collar jobs.”

### Storylines

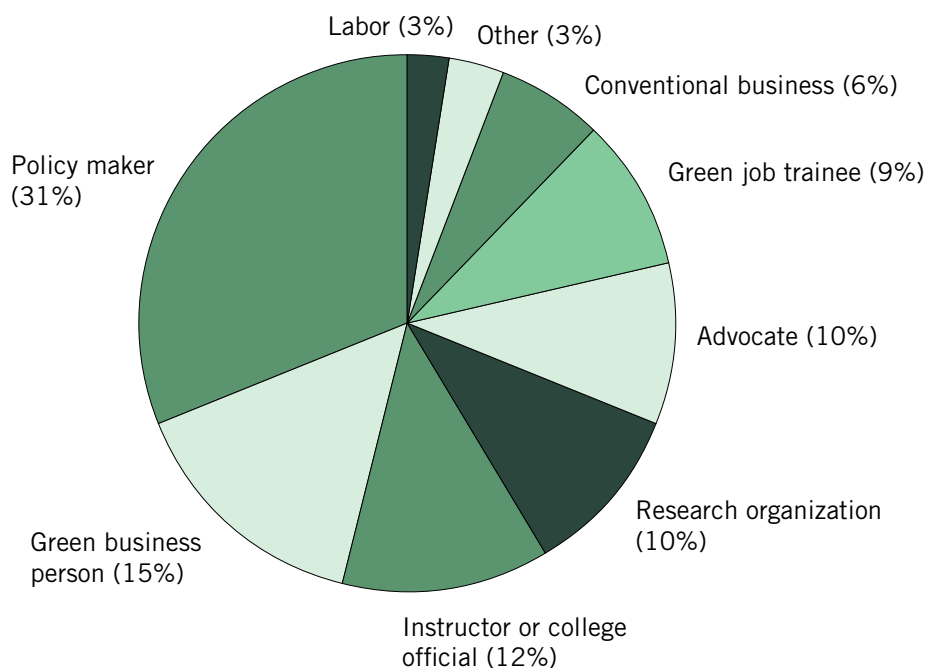


- ◆ **Secondary storylines:** retooling or repowering American business and manufacturing; green jobs training programs putting unemployed or underprivileged to work. The role of green jobs in a transition away from fossil fuels—for national security, energy independence, and economic stability—didn't get much play.
- ◆ **Defining green jobs.** A clear definition of “green jobs” or “green-collar jobs” was elusive—and stories often dwelled on this fact (What is a green job anyway? they often asked—without finding a definitive answer). That said, stories were more likely to emphasize building efficiency, weatherization, and retrofits as mainstays of a green workforce than they were to emphasize renewable energy industries (wind, solar, geothermal)—although both types of jobs were commonly referred to.
- ◆ **Messengers.** A range of messengers was quoted, from policy makers to businesspeople. Advocates from both sides of the green jobs question were quoted along with spokespeople from green jobs training programs (often community college administrators) and green-collar job program trainees. Most quoted were policy makers, which includes elected officials and their staff or members of their administration.

### What are green jobs?

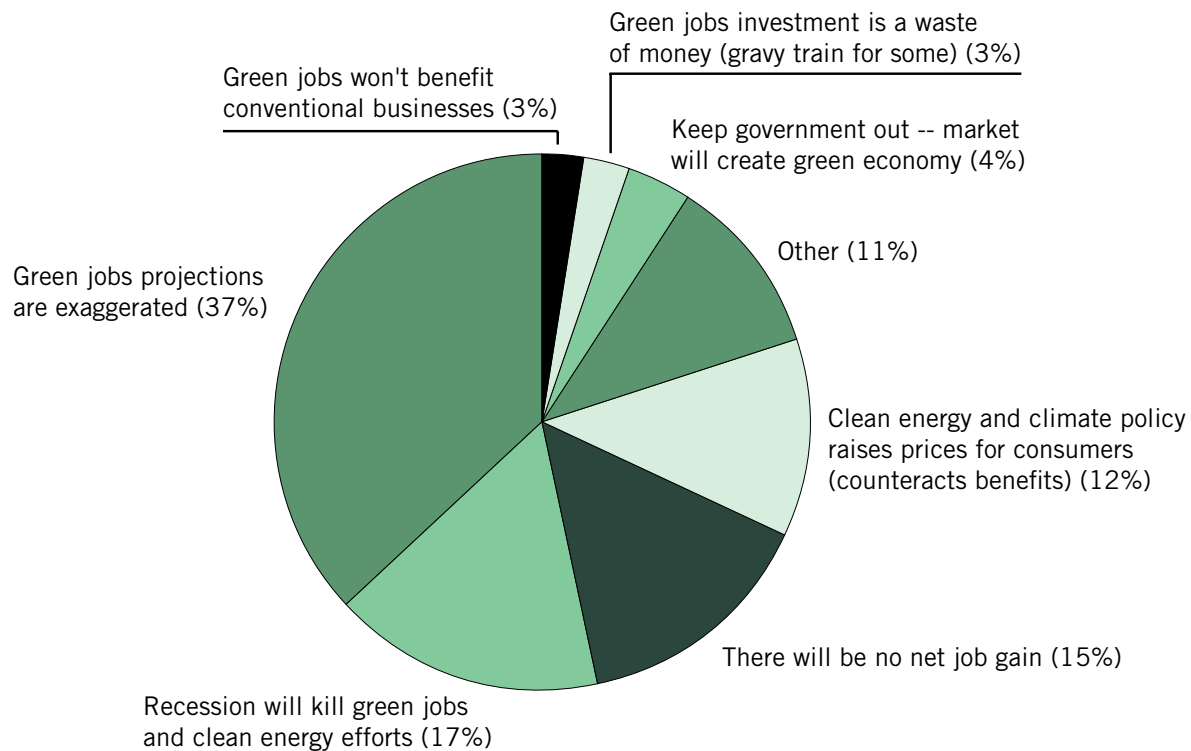


### Messengers



- ◆ **Oppositional messages.** Those opposed to programs that invest in green jobs and clean energy initiatives most often cite economic arguments in their communications. The most common claim is that projected job growth is exaggerated. Akin to that is the claim that there will be no net gain in jobs. Another set of arguments focuses on consumers, warning that a recession is not the time for clean-energy efforts and that energy policy raises prices (more analysis of oppositional messages below).

## Oppositional Messages



## UNDERSTANDING COMMON OPPOSITIONAL MESSAGES

Those opposed to programs that invest in green jobs and clean-energy initiatives most often cite economic arguments in their communications. The prevailing tone is one of skepticism.

### “Empty promises”

The most common oppositional claim has been that green jobs projections are overstated. Even proponents of green jobs worry that overpromising could backfire: “As a proponent of renewables, I’m concerned that exaggerated numbers just give skeptics more ammunition to undermine green-energy efforts.”

**Among these arguments are several sub-themes:**

- ◆ **The green economy is a fad.** “But some skeptics argue that the phrase ‘green jobs’ is little more than a trendy term for politicians and others to bandy about.”
- ◆ **The numbers are uncertain.** “The green jobs studies made estimates using poor economic models based on dubious assumptions.”
- ◆ **Benefits for the economy are trumped up.** “Relying on trendy, green-minded principles will only worsen economies.”
- ◆ **No one can yet agree on what a green job actually is.** “[lack of a clear definition] mak[es] it difficult, if not impossible, to measure whether eco-based jobs are being created and whether, as the administration has claimed, they’re the saviors of a sagging economy.”
- ◆ **No net gain in jobs.** There is another common refrain that creating green jobs often does not create jobs on a net basis. Put another way: “‘green’ proposals fail to consider the jobs lost due to the massive changes they envision in the US economy.” Or: “Changing regulatory and tax laws to force a shift from fossil fuels to solar and wind power will certainly create jobs installing and servicing solar panels and wind mills, but it will reduce employment at coal mines, oil fields, refineries and fossil-fueled power plants. Once those job losses are taken into account, these programs may not produce a net increase in employment.”

**“Now is not the time”**

Another common claim is that the economic downturn is not the time for public investment in green jobs and a clean-energy economy. Folded into this argument is the claim that consumers would be hurt “now more than ever” by increased energy prices.

These messages go something like this: “The recession will kill efforts to boost this sector”; “Green power is expensive and depends on massive subsidization”; “Hard times may prove harmful for the environmental cause”; “[cap and trade is an] expensive new [emissions] tax that businesses and consumers can ill afford during such hard times”; or “what good does a job do when you still can’t afford to pay your utility bill.”

**Other oppositional messages**

The “other” category includes arguments used less often but nonetheless present in the discourse, such as: “green jobs don’t provide a living wage”; “there’s too much political wrangling to get anything passed”; “there’s a lack of training infrastructure”; “the definition is too loose”; “trainees cannot find jobs”; and “green jobs provide only short-term employment.” Additionally, some oppositional messages focused on climate and energy policy itself and not on green jobs per se. Those are not recorded here (although some certainly overlap—e.g. “consumer prices will go up” and “the recession is no time to transition our economy.”)

## MESSAGING OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Momentum and public opinion is on the side of green-collar jobs, and in investments in a clean energy economy. But opponents have been outspoken and consistent. That means there's work to be done to counteract lingering skepticism and ensure that the buzz is perceived as more than mere hype. To this end, clean energy and green jobs policy advocates' messages should reinforce both the reality of green-collar jobs in local communities and the economic benefits of policy and investments that create those jobs, acknowledging that obstacles may stand in the way but clearly illustrating the ways to overcome them.

Here are some strategies for talking about green jobs based on our analysis of media coverage as well as a review of existing research and best practices by expert communicators:

### Green jobs investments: A 3-in-1 solution

Investments in clean energy and green jobs are a 3-in-1 solution. They turn big challenges—energy, climate change, and the economy—into big opportunities for families and businesses in our communities.

- ◆ **Economy.** Clean-energy investments create good-paying, local jobs. Green jobs put people back to work and revive local economies—and they can't be outsourced.
- ◆ **Climate.** Green jobs cut pollution that's choking the atmosphere. We're ready for the transition away from the dirty fossil fuels that are overloading our atmosphere and threatening our climate, our security, and our livelihoods.
- ◆ **Energy.** Green jobs unhitch us from the fossil fuel roller-coaster. Clean energy and efficiency are like shock absorbers, smoothing sudden price spikes, saving money on energy bills, and keeping energy dollars in local economies.

### Effective quotes from our analysis

"I'm not looking for a bailout – just a good-paying job. That's why I like this clean energy idea. Now that works... for our whole family. For the kids, a better environment. For my wife who commutes, no more getting jerked around on gas prices. And for me, well, it wouldn't be so bad if this breadwinner brought home more bread."

"Green jobs are especially good because they cannot be easily outsourced, say, to Asia. If you put up solar panels, you can't ship a building to Asia and have them put the solar panels on and ship it back. These jobs have to be done in the United States."

"Keeping things local—jobs and money—is what makes clean energy vital to the economy. Paying solar installers and contractors the same dollars that otherwise would go to foreign oil companies will ripple across the entire economy as the money is re-spent again and again, locally."

## Put economic messages to work

Economic opportunity represents a winning suite of messages for green jobs. But many audiences are wary that green jobs are more hype than reality—especially when they don't see examples of green jobs or their benefits in their own lives.

Here are tips to overcome the “fear of hype,” and convince audiences that green jobs offer real, concrete benefits for local communities.

- ◆ **Show, don't tell.** Highlight real success stories—local jobs and community benefits. Profile businesses that are hiring, homeowners who are benefiting from retrofits, and workers bringing home green paychecks.
- ◆ **Anchor the promise to a plan.** Green jobs won't happen overnight and they won't materialize without public policy and investment. It's important to acknowledge the obstacles that stand in the way and offer a policy plan that will turn the promise into a reality. Messages should connect the dots between energy and climate policy and the lasting economic benefits of clean-energy investments and green jobs for local communities.
- ◆ **Paint a picture locals can see themselves in.** Emphasize that green jobs are local jobs—they cannot be outsourced. Stress that green jobs employ familiar skills and technologies—this is not about futuristic visions, but about hammers, insulation, and caulk guns. Back up the terms “green jobs” and “green-collar jobs” with concrete examples of what jobs those are—electricians installing energy-efficient fixtures, construction crews installing insulation and windows. And point out that local green jobs help everybody—saving homeowners and business owners money on utility bills.

## Effective quotes from our analysis

“Smart policy sets a framework for investment. It sends signals to the market that in time can transform the larger economy. This is how we built the railroads, electrified rural America, deployed the National Highway System, and launched a nuclear energy industry. In each case, public investment and public policy created vast new opportunities for jobs and profits in the private sector, enabling market transformation and industry growth.”

“Residents will be paying 30 percent less for their utilities than in an ordinary building. For them, going green is a survivability issue. It's important for the environment, but it's really important for their pocketbooks.”

“I think sometimes when we think about ecological solutions, we think about very high-end stuff -- you know, maybe space-age technology, way off in the future. What we forget is most of the things we need right now to reduce pollution, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, don't require fancy technology. You know what it requires? A caulking gun.”

“You can employ a lot of people very quickly with off-the-shelf technology

like caulk guns. This isn't George Jetson stuff.”

“No one would describe Intervale as cutting edge, but it is green where it counts—with more energy efficient appliances, better window insulation and energy efficient fluorescent lights, all of which will enable its low-income residents to save real money on their utility bills.”

“Look at retrofitting a home: you have the worker putting in insulation. Where did she buy that insulation? Maybe she's putting in a new boiler and furnace, but where did she get them? Who made them? There are ripple effects. You're stimulating local small businesses, and you're saving people money they were spending on their utility bill.”

### Paychecks with a Purpose

Patriotism, duty, and pride: these values underlie a powerful but underutilized set of messages that bolster support green jobs investments.

Green-collar work offers a sense of pride and purpose that's often missing from conventional construction or manufacturing jobs.

One Iraq war veteran, now an engineer with a solar company, put it this way: “People sometimes mistook me for a killing machine. But when you say you work in renewable energy, it's like you're a hero.”

Green jobs are more than just a paycheck, they:

- ◆ **Help families in our communities.** Messages should emphasize that green jobs help families in local communities. Efficiency retrofits save local homeowners and business owners money on their energy bills, raise property values, and keep local dollars in local economies.
- ◆ **Give local economies a competitive edge.** A storyline that maintained traction in a broad range of media coverage was that green jobs and clean-energy investments give businesses, states, communities—and the country—a competitive edge. Messages should stress that a move toward clean energy is happening now. Those who dawdle may be left out.
- ◆ **Make our families and economy more secure.** Green jobs cushion the economy from volatile energy prices and reduce our dependence on dirty fossil fuels. Homegrown renewable energy and efficiency will boost employment while acting as a shock absorber for local families and businesses who currently suffer from the roller-coaster of volatile energy prices.
- ◆ **Protect our climate and leave a legacy we can be proud of.** What type of economy, environment, and future do we want to enjoy today and pass on to our children tomorrow? Lower energy bills, good jobs, and a healthy planet are good for everyone.

The economy is central to effective messaging around green jobs, but we shouldn't lose sight of climate change as a powerful motivating factor. To this end, messages should

connect policy choices to shared values. In the case of green-collar jobs, the values that rose to the top were opportunity, vigorous competition, responsibility to families and our communities, pride in American ingenuity, and our commitment to a healthy economic and environmental legacy.

### **Effective quotes from our analysis**

“I’m excited for the possibilities of what this project could bring. Not only for us as a utility, but for our customers and the environment as well.”

“It feels good working for a company that is bringing jobs into the country instead of taking jobs out of the country. I feel noble doing a green job. We have to get away from fossil fuels and oil so we can tell the Saudis to take a hike.”

“Now, I’ll be doing something a little more rewarding, more environmentally conscious. I’ll be trying to help customers save some money; that’s a good feeling. And this looks like a field that will be growing.”

“I told them, ‘You’re making us safer at home. By getting us away from the people who sell us oil, you’re playing a key role in our national security.’”

“The United States must expand its clean-energy policy vision to support the small and midsize component manufacturers that are willing and able to become suppliers of clean and efficient products, but that need up-front capital to retool or expand their facilities. Without these investments, we run the risk of trading our dependency on foreign oil and pollution-based energy for a dependency on imported clean-energy components and systems—and being left behind in the new global race to build and export high-quality, low-carbon technologies.”

“We know transitioning to clean energy is an economic necessity. Families need savings on their energy bills, workers need good jobs with good wages that clean energy can deliver, and our manufacturing sector must stay competitive in the industries of the future. This is also a values question: what type of economy, environment and future do we want to pass on to our children? Lower energy bills, good jobs and a healthy planet are family values.”

## APPENDIX

We collected several hundred articles about green collar jobs published online between January 1 and August 31, 2009. To narrow our analysis, we eliminated stories that weren't considered mainstream media news (for example, specialty or partisan websites, trade journals, newspapers from very small towns, and stories that only mentioned green jobs in passing.) We prioritized stories from the Northwest and western states over stories from other parts of the country unless the source was considered "nationally significant"—as in the Boston Globe or New York Times. We included stories from magazines, television and radio broadcasts, newspapers, and news wires.

We also analyzed the communications (primarily emails and webpages) of green collar job advocates in order to determine pro-green jobs messaging already being employed.

### Source list

ABC News	MSNBC
Arizona Republic	New York Times
Ashland Daily Tidings	Newsweek
Bloomberg	NOW, PBS
Boston Globe	Olympian
Business Week	Oregon Public Broadcasting
CBS News	Oregonian
Christian Science Monitor	Portland Business Journals
Clark County Columbian	Reuters
CNBC	Rocky Mountain News
CNN Money	Sacramento Bee
Colorado Statesman	Salt Lake City Tribune
Contra Costa Times	San Francisco Bay Guardian
Denver Daily News	San Francisco Business Times
Denver Post	San Francisco Chronicle
Deseret News	Scientific American
Economist	Seattle Post Globe
Eugene Register Guard	Seattle Post-Intelligencer
Forbes	Seattle Times
Fox Business	Time Magazine
Fox News	Tri-City Herald
KPBS San Diego	US News and World Report
Las Vegas Review Journal	USA Today
Los Angeles Times	Wall Street Journal
Missoulian	Washington Post

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