

## 4 Reasons Clean Energy Jobs Are Just Smart

Holly Fritz, Communications/Policy Associate • Sep. 18, 2020



Jobs are one of the biggest sources of economic stimulation. While [131,000 clean energy jobs](#) in the Midwest were lost due to COVID-19, they are beginning to return. Clean energy jobs offer unique opportunities that are helping to keep the country going. Here are just four reasons we think clean energy jobs are "just smart:"

### 1. Clean energy jobs have a wide reach.

Jobs within the clean energy sector cast a wide net, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, advanced transportation, grid and storage and clean fuels. In the renewable energy sector, jobs can be found in industries that include transportation and shipping, law, finance, technology and many more.

In the shipping industry, for example, workers are needed to move wind components from the ships to the various ground transportation vehicles. One highly specialized job specific to the wind industry is called a stevedore. Stevedores are specially trained to take blades off the ship, store them and then load the specialized trucks that transport them to a project. At Michigan's Port Fisher, [over 40 stevedores](#) oversee and handle these operations. When turbine blades arrive in a port, this also creates a ripple effect for the surrounding community as these workers fill up hotels and housing complexes and dine at local eateries.

Other industries that support clean energy with great jobs include professions like legal and financial services, utilities, construction, operations and manufacturing jobs.

## 2. Clean energy jobs provide stability.

Clean energy jobs provide family-supporting wages and opportunities for advancement that can build a foundation for a lasting career. [About 250,000](#) Americans currently work in the solar industry, and [120,000 people](#) are employed in the wind industry. Solar installer is the fastest growing profession in the country, and pays an average annual salary of [\\$44,890](#). Wind turbine technician follows as the second fastest growing job in the country and holds an average annual salary of [\\$52,910](#). The U.S. wind industry also creates new manufacturing jobs every year. Currently, over 26,000 Americans work in a high-quality job in over 530 manufacturing facilities in 43 states.

Clean energy jobs also create stable, family-supporting opportunities for the country's veterans. According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), veterans make up 11 percent of the total clean energy workforce. The U.S. wind industry proudly creates more jobs for veterans than any other industry in the nation. In fact, veterans are hired for a direct wind job at a rate over [67 percent](#) higher than the average U.S. industry.

The expansion of the renewable energy industry has boosted other industries that were struggling to stay afloat, especially during the pandemic. An estimated [2.3 million](#) clean energy workers are employed with companies that received Paycheck Protection Program loans. Minnesota-based [Anderson Trucking Service](#) has spent the last 20 years becoming the nation's largest on-the-ground transporter of wind turbine parts. Millions of dollars were spent acquiring specialized equipment and hiring drivers. Despite the losses from the COVID-19 pandemic, 12,300 loads have been delivered in the first eight months of this year, which already exceeds last year's 8,300 trips.

## 3. Clean energy jobs boost rural communities.

According to [Clean Jobs Midwest](#), more than one in five clean energy jobs in 2019 were located in rural areas - the equivalent of more than 158,000 jobs. Farmers who lease their land to renewable energy developers also reap important financial benefits. In fact, hosting a project can help keep a farm in the family. In 2018, it was [reported](#) that wind farms improved finances in more than 400 counties across 41 states. By the end of 2019, landowners received [\\$912 million](#) in lease payments. Wind and solar projects also produce a good amount of production or property tax revenue, which goes back to host communities. This allows many counties to invest in infrastructure projects, improving schools, and even keeping the lid on tax levies for residents.

In its first year alone, taxes generated from wind projects provided over \$2 million for a [Ford County, Illinois](#) school district. With these funds, the district was able to hire more teachers, improve buildings, and upgrade technology. In Benton County, Indiana, nearby wind farms provided funding for emergency vehicle upgrades, as well as training for EMT's to become paramedics. In addition, over \$1 million of this tax revenue was used toward a \$6.2 million project to a run fiber optic line that provides residents with access to high speed, low-cost internet.

## 4. Clean energy jobs are aiding in the post-pandemic recovery.

Clean energy jobs were blossoming before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are signs that they are [bouncing back](#). According to a [BW research study](#), the renewable energy sector saw a 3.5 percent growth rate in June 2020, and more than 100,000 clean energy jobs were added that month. In Minnesota, the projected growth rate of wind technician jobs between 2014 and 2024 is [108 percent](#).

Some utilities across the Midwest are rolling out new investments to aid in the COVID-19 recovery. In Minnesota, Xcel Energy [accelerated \\$3 billion in energy investments](#) to create 5,000 new jobs in the

state. Solar was also deemed an ["essential service"](#) in the state, which allowed installers to go back to work. Wind was also ruled as essential in other states. In Illinois, utilities are planning to contribute [\\$47 million](#) to a COVID-19 Bill Pay Assistance Program.

Before the pandemic, clean energy jobs were growing twice as fast as the overall economy. Despite the COVID-19 setback, clean energy jobs are still offering amazing opportunities. Utilities continue to invest in renewable energy because it's a reliable, low-cost resource and has the added benefit of helping reduce carbon from our atmosphere. The growth of renewable energy also provides landowners with a cash crop that provides much-needed economic diversity during times when crop prices are low. At the same time, renewable energy is employing thousands of professionals with good-paying jobs that help support families in all 50 states. That's why clean energy jobs are just smart.