

For Whom the BPI Tolls: Impacts of Workforce Training in the Home Performance Industry

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how workforce development in Oregon's home performance sector can respond to rising demand for healthier, more energy-efficient homes while expanding access to careers for workers historically underrepresented in the trades. Using EnerCity Collaborative (ECC), a Portland, Oregon-based nonprofit workforce training organization as a case example, it explores the opportunities and limitations of certification-based training in their regional industry. The paper situates EnerCity Collaborative's work within a complex ecosystem shaped by utility programs and public funding mechanisms, contractor demand and labor shortages, statewide coordination challenges, and the industry's shift toward whole-house delivery models.

Among the state's energy funding entities and resources, Energy Trust of Oregon is a unique statewide actor. The paper highlights Energy Trust's emerging strategic role in coordinating existing partners to shape the state's clean energy workforce development resources. It concludes that workforce development should be treated as essential market infrastructure. As such, equitable economic growth will require coordinated investment, inclusive program design, stronger data practices, and long-term support to connect training to durable career pathways.

Introduction

This paper examines how workforce development efforts in Oregon's home performance sector can respond to growing market demand, inequitable access to clean energy careers, and the changing technical requirements of residential retrofit work. Using the experience of EnerCity Collaborative (ECC) as a case example, it explores the opportunities and limits of certification-based training within a broader clean energy workforce strategy.

Workforce development in the home performance sector in most states is shaped by utility programs, public funding, contractor demand, and statewide policy goals. The result is often a disconnected set of program rules and financial incentives. Energy Trust of Oregon is a unique nonprofit created by state legislation (Energy Trust of Oregon 2026a). Bound to its statewide, utility-specific mission to reduce energy use and increase the role of renewable energy, Energy Trust supports the home performance industry as a means of generating new energy projects.

For many years, Energy Trust has supported the organization and growth of trade contractors in its service territory. Recent strategic planning efforts have led to an organization-wide focus on workforce development (Energy Trust of Oregon 2026b, 6). This direction has made worker recruitment, training, and retention central to its market infrastructure investments. Among these new investments in workforce training infrastructure were two successive annual grants that have supported both the creation and capacity of EnerCity Collaborative.

James Metoyer III founded EnerCity Collaborative (ECC) in 2022, creating the second training center to offer Building Performance Institute (BPI) credentials in the state of Oregon. The other facility, Oregon Training Institute, primarily supports the low-income weatherization

programs which are delivered by Community Action Agencies. Since its inception, ECC has been proving that BPI credentials are a useful tool for clean energy and building trades career seekers and their employers. BPI provides nationally recognized standards and credentials specific to the home performance industry (BPI 2026). As the only Black-led residential energy training center in the state, ECC was launched with a clear mission: to prove that, when paired with intentional supports that reduce barriers and increase inclusivity, BPI certification training can generate a qualified and diverse home performance workforce that reflects the communities it serves.

This paper highlights the new funding streams that play a critical role in Oregon's labor outlook. Energy Trust of Oregon is one of the regional energy program implementers supporting a shift toward a more integrated, whole-house approach to home performance upgrades. This change increases the need for workers with strong diagnostic skills, broader systems thinking, and greater familiarity with evolving program requirements.

By placing ECC's experience within this wider market and policy context, this paper will highlight the specific workforce needs of Oregon's home performance sector, focusing on demographic gaps and coordination challenges. Among the factors affecting the industry are the need for consistent funding, stronger data practices, marketable worker credentials, and culturally inclusive support for the diversity of Oregon's priority communities.

Industry Context: Workforce Demand, Labor Shortages, and Market Change

Residential energy efficiency and home performance work are entering a period of significant growth and transition. Nationally, the energy efficiency sector employed nearly 2.4 million workers in 2024, making it the largest segment of the U.S. energy workforce and one of the fastest-growing energy sectors (U.S. Department of Energy 2025a). Energy efficiency jobs in Oregon have been hovering at just over 40,000 in the past ten years, representing nearly half of all of the state's energy jobs (U.S. Department of Energy 2025b). Recent federal, state, and local investments in building decarbonization, electrification, and home energy upgrades are increasing demand for workers, particularly those who can assess existing homes, identify energy-saving opportunities, and deliver quality retrofit projects. In Oregon, this demand is reinforced by state climate and equity goals and the 2006 legislation that mandates that a portion of utility ratepayer funds be allocated to increase energy efficiency through the programs of Energy Trust of Oregon.

Despite the state's relatively consistent political influence, contractors, program administrators, and policymakers continue to report labor shortages and workforce development constraints that threaten the pace and scale of market growth. The challenge is not only training and certifying new workers but also ensuring there is a sustained pipeline of energy efficiency and retrofit projects that can provide ongoing employment, support contractor growth, and create long-term career opportunities within the clean energy economy. With several different construction trades in demand to supply home performance projects (e.g. weatherization, HVAC, electrical and plumbing) forecasting the employment landscape is complex at its baseline, and dire when the retirement demographic trend is added to the picture.

Across Oregon and nationally, 41% of currently employed tradespeople are expected to retire by 2031 (ABC Rocky Mountain 2025). This creates urgency around attracting younger workers, supporting career transitions for people new to the trades, and building more intentional pathways for historically underrepresented populations. In Oregon, the rural-urban divide and the unique governmental structures of the state's nine federally recognized Native American tribes

add yet another level of complexity to contractor recruitment and skilled labor availability. Workforce shortages are especially significant in residential retrofit fields that require a blend of technical knowledge, diagnostic skills, customer communication, and familiarity with evolving program requirements (Srivastava, Ayala, and Aquino 2025).

The nature of home performance work is also changing. Historically, many efficiency programs have emphasized individual measures or isolated equipment upgrades. Increasingly, however, the field is moving toward a whole-house approach that treats homes as interconnected systems. This model recognizes that heating, cooling, ventilation, insulation, air sealing, moisture management, combustion safety, and occupant health all influence one another and should be addressed in an integrated way.

As home performance programs shift toward this systems-based model, workforce needs are evolving as well. Workers must be prepared not only to install measures, but also to understand building science, use diagnostic equipment, interpret test results, and support more comprehensive decision-making about residential retrofit strategies. This shift raises the importance of training models that can prepare workers for more complex, interdisciplinary roles within Oregon's clean energy economy.

Underrepresentation, Barriers, and Data Gaps

Like most construction trades industries in the United States, the home performance workforce does not reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. Women and Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) remain underrepresented in the construction, building performance, and technical service delivery sectors. In Oregon, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 29% of the energy efficiency workforce are women (Smart Buildings Center 2024); however, the rate of women in construction or installer roles remains just over 5% (Huang 2024). Black Oregonians make up only 3.2% of the industry, compared with 6.8% of the state's total population (Smart Buildings Center 2024). Limited data availability also presents challenges to our understanding of the representation problem. For example, public labor statistics are not inclusive of all gender identities, nor do they provide consistent data on sexual orientation. These gaps matter not only from an equity perspective, but also from a workforce capacity perspective. As Oregon seeks to expand residential retrofit and healthy homes work, it will need to draw from a broader talent pool than the industry has historically engaged.

Furthermore, public workforce datasets often aggregate broad occupational categories and do not consistently distinguish residential building performance from adjacent fields. Because residential trade jobs are very rarely unionized, reliable data on wages, benefits and promotions is not consistently available. Even so, incomplete data should not be a reason to delay action. Workforce strategies in Oregon should continue to treat women, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ communities as priority populations for outreach, supportive services, mentorship, and long-term retention efforts.

Barriers to entry, skill development and training certification include limited awareness of home performance careers, uneven preparation in technical concepts, language access challenges, training and exam costs, lost wages during training, childcare and transportation needs, scheduling constraints, and limited demographic representation in both training and work environments. For many participants, these barriers reinforce one another.

Workplace safety is also central to long-term participation, particularly for women, BIPOC, non-binary and transgender workers navigating these male-dominated sectors. In

construction and home performance, safety must include not only physical jobsite risks but also protection from harassment, intimidation, retaliation, and hostile workplace culture. Just last year the construction industry was shocked by the jobsite murder of Amber Czech, a twenty-year-old welder in Minnesota (Wikipedia 2026). A brutal crime like this has a chilling effect on those who may consider entering the construction trades.

Clear expectations for respectful conduct, safe and effective reporting mechanisms, and accountability are just some of the actions employers can take to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. This cultural shift is extremely difficult to implement, given the decentralized nature and long history of hostility on construction job sites. ECC's model responds to these challenges by pairing certification preparation with mentorship, culturally responsive instruction, nocost access, stipends to participate and relationship-based support.

Case Example: EnerCity Collaborative

EnerCity Collaborative is an advocacy and training organization based in Portland, Oregon. Its mission is to ensure that the financial, environmental, and health benefits of a clean energy future are fully realized among Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), underserved, and frontline communities. Within the broader industry context outlined above, ECC offers a concrete example of how one organization responded to emerging workforce needs, equity gaps, and market change in Oregon.

James Metoyer recognized the need for ECC through his firsthand experience as a Black man in Oregon's Home Performance industry. After entering the field through Building Performance Institute training and certification himself, he saw that industry-recognized training and credentials are powerful pathways into meaningful careers in the residential energy efficiency sector.

In James' experience, it was common to find limited representation of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color within both training environments and professional spaces. However it was evident to him that many of the communities that could benefit most from energy efficiency improvement, specifically historically underserved and frontline communities, often had limited awareness of available career pathways, training opportunities, and energy efficiency programs.

"Frontline" communities are also often referred to as "environmental justice" communities; in this paper these terms refer to "communities of color, Indigenous peoples, immigrants and refugees, and people with lower incomes who are impacted first and worst by environmental hazards and climate change" (Patschke 2024). In other sources referenced in this paper, such as Energy Trust of Oregon's strategic planning documentation and state legislation, the authors also use the term "priority population" to refer to historically underserved communities in an inclusive way.

ECC was established in 2023 to help address these gaps by expanding access to education, workforce development, and contractor support opportunities within the clean energy economy. Through nationally recognized training, industry credentials, and regional employment connections in the energy efficiency sector, ECC addresses a previously unmet need. However, James and his team also recognize that effective workforce development that will effectively address the representation gap must extend beyond technical training alone. It requires intentional efforts to reduce barriers to participation, mentorship and other support services. This, combined with clear and accessible entry points to career pathways, can engage members of communities that are most affected by economic, environmental, and health disparities. In this way, the home performance workforce can finally begin to reflect the communities it serves.

Building Performance Institute (BPI) Training Strategy

The timing of ECC's formation was particularly significant, as new climate change investments were becoming available through the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF). In 2018, Portland voters approved the creation of this local fund for climate resilience investments. Although it is limited geographically to the state's largest city, the passage of PCEF created a 1% local corporate tax to provide consistent, long-term funding to address the impacts of climate change on its residents (City of Portland 2026). Through legislation initiated and advocated for by a collective of grassroots communities-of-color-led organizations, PCEF is now contributing roughly \$150 million annually to local clean energy and green infrastructure projects (City of Portland 2026).

PCEF's integration of BPI credentials into its newly-created residential efficiency program requirements has provided both a market catalyst and an investment in workforce capacity. ECC was ready when PCEF called in 2025 to seize the opportunity and expand workforce training to produce a more inclusive pipeline of workers for the local home performance sector.

BPI develops and maintains certification and examination standards that are practical in nature and designed to signal to employers, utilities, and program administrators that a credential holder has achieved a proven base of knowledge and field-relevant skills (BPI 2026). ECC selected BPI as the foundation of its training strategy because it aligns closely with the technical skills needed to support residential energy efficiency and home retrofit programs.

The broad series of home performance certifications offered by BPI can support multiple entry points for workers, ranging from foundational knowledge and field skills to more advanced building science competencies. However, BPI itself does not provide in-person training or curriculum. Because certification includes extensive practical exam and proctoring requirements, BPI instruction requires significant infrastructure, including trained instructors, diagnostic equipment, testing space, and administrative capacity.

Historically in Oregon, in-person, site-based BPI training has been delivered by a limited number of providers, with much of the training infrastructure connected to Community Action Agencies that receive federal funding to deliver low-income weatherization programs. This history helps explain both the value of BPI as an industry-recognized credential and the access challenges that ECC sought to address by developing a local, community-centered training model.

The decision to use BPI was also informed by firsthand observation of the value that BPI credentials can provide. Industry-recognized certifications help establish credibility, create consistency in training outcomes, and signal competency to employers, utilities, and program administrators. Within the home performance sector, BPI credentials have long served as a common benchmark for workforce qualifications and quality assurance.

When ECC was established, the Portland metropolitan region had limited local access to BPI training and certification opportunities despite growing demand for skilled workers capable of supporting residential retrofit and energy efficiency programs. There was also an opportunity to expand access to these credentials among populations that had historically been underrepresented in the industry. By creating a locally-based training center led by and intentionally serving diverse communities, ECC sought to increase access to nationally recognized credentials while helping develop a broader and more inclusive pipeline of workers prepared to participate in Oregon's growing clean energy economy.

Challenges of a Certification-Based Workforce Training Model

While certification can create access and credibility, implementing a credential-based workforce model brings operational and equity challenges. Major issues ECC experienced include the need to build curriculum without a standardized training package, wide variation in learner readiness, limited instructor diversity, language-access needs, the time and cost of performance-based testing, and the ongoing expense of facilities and diagnostic equipment.

These challenges are amplified by the hands-on nature of Building Analyst Technician training, which requires a suitable residential testing environment and substantial practice with blower doors, manometers, combustion analyzers, and other field tools. ECC addressed these issues through curriculum development with multiple learning modalities, flexible instructional supports, and a training-house model. This experience underscores how resource-intensive certification-based training can be for both providers and participants.

ECC's Inclusive Training Model

ECC's inclusive training model was designed in response to structural barriers that technical instruction alone cannot solve. The program emphasizes representation, culturally responsive teaching, language accessibility, and flexible instructional methods that combine classroom learning, visual demonstrations, discussion, and hands-on practice.

ECC also centers belonging and relationship-building through cohort-based learning, peer support, mentorship, meals during training, and connections to employers, contractors, utilities, and professional networks. These wraparound strategies help participants build confidence, navigate certification requirements, and translate training into employment and longer-term career growth.

Value Proposition for Workers, Contractors, and the Market

Despite the challenges, certification still offers a clear value proposition. For workers, BPI credentials provide third-party validation of skills, portable qualifications, foundational building science knowledge, and a structured pathway into more advanced roles. For contractors and market actors, certification offers a recognizable benchmark for technical competency, supports participation in utility and publicly-funded programs, and helps build customer confidence in a market where credentials often function as a proxy for quality.

In Oregon, that value is shaped by the broader energy efficiency program ecosystem. Public investments such as Energy Trust programs and the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund increase demand for trained and credentialed workers while reinforcing the importance of standardized skills. ECC's model has expanded access to these benefits by reducing cost barriers, connecting participants to employers and professional networks, and helping contractors meet evolving program expectations.

Outcomes and Early Indicators

ECC's early results suggest that their community-centered training has expanded access to industry-recognized credentials while broadening participation among populations historically underrepresented in home performance. Approximately 74% of participants in ECC's training programs have identified themselves as BIPOC, including 32% as Black or African American.

29% have identified as female or non-binary. Participant satisfaction has also remained strong, with instructor effectiveness and overall training quality averaging 4.7 out of 5.

EnerCity Collaborative Training Participation Data

In February 2026, 111 ECC training program alumni were invited to respond to a survey. A total of 17 individuals responded, representing a 15.3% response rate. All these responses are included in the summary below. The respondents all participated in a BPI training - either Building Science Principles, Building Analyst-Technician, and/or Building Analyst-Professional, delivered by ECC between 2023-2025.

While a bit more than half of survey respondents (9 of 17) had three years or less experience in the residential construction industry, 88% of survey respondents (15 of 17) said they are currently working on energy efficiency projects, primarily through government- or utility-funded energy efficiency programs. In addition, 76% of respondents (13 of 17) said they are currently working in a role as either a business owner, independent contractor, or supervisor/manager.

The following ECC post-participation survey results provide additional context for these high-level outcomes and offer some sense of the market impact of ECC's training investment:

Table 1: ECC Participant Demographic Outcomes: Years in Residential Construction/Contracting

Response Option	Count	% of Respondents
Less than 1 year	1	5.9%
1 - 3 years	8	47.1%
4 - 7 years	2	11.8%
8 - 15 years	2	11.8%
16+ years	4	23.5%

Table 2: ECC Demographic Outcomes: Current Role

Response Option	Count	% of Respondents
Business owner	6	35.3%
Employee	6	35.3%
Independent contractor	4	23.5%
Supervisor/manager	3	17.6%
Project Manager	2	11.8%
Project coordinator	1	5.9%
Energy Auditor / Project Manager	1	5.9%
Nontechnical person	0	0.0%

Table 3: ECC Outcomes: Currently Working on Energy Efficiency Projects for: (multi-select)

Response Option	Count	% of Respondents
Portland Clean Energy Benefits Fund (PCEF grants)	12	70.6%
Energy Friendly Homes Program (PCEF-funded)	10	58.8%
Energy Trust of Oregon	9	52.9%
Weatherization Assistance Programs	1	5.9%
Oregon Health Authority	1	5.9%
NWN OLIEE	1	5.9%
OEF	1	5.9%
None yet	1	5.9%
Not yet	1	5.9%

Several elements appear to be contributing to these impactful outcomes: no-cost access to training and testing, stipends to participate, strong emphasis on representation and mentorship, cohort-based peer networks, and deliberate connections to the broader home performance ecosystem. ECC has also improved language access through interpretation, translated materials, and support for Spanish-language technical resources, although broader industry limitations remain.

The following free-form survey responses convey more nuance about the personal impact of the BPI training cohort experience at ECC:

Table 4: ECC Outcomes: What has been the most valuable outcome of the training for your business, your customers, or your team?

I've been more confident in teaching clients and my team about energy efficiency and home health due to the content of the training.
Everyone on my team is now certified to run blower doors. This has been very helpful, as we are now all able to cover all projects. We all are operating with a deeper understanding of BSP which makes our insight more valuable and we are now better able to serve our clients because of it.
Utilizing a common language to describe observations.
This training has allowed our Home Heating and Cooling Program at our nonprofit to expand into offering not only heat pumps for homes but also insulation, and exhaust fans. This training also helped win the trust of our internal organization, external partners, and partnered contractors. The training helped my team to be confident in our work.
Understanding how the house works as a system, gaining knowledge on what measures need to be tackled first when we are working on our projects. I'm now more knowledgeable about what health and safety issues to look for in homes.
The most valuable outcome of the training has been the ability to integrate building science into our construction services.
Confidence

It is a very good refresher for me and timely so I can share with my staff and get them excited about future trainings.
Givin' us the knowledge we need to do the job right!
Having this training and the accompanying certifications have allowed me to better serve the marginalized communities in ways that bring down their energy burdens and allows them to live more comfortably and healthily.
My team operates with a deeper understanding of building science principles and a greater technical knowledge to operate diagnostic equipment which makes our insight more valuable. We are now better able to serve our clients because of it.
This training will enable me to contribute to my community in ways that align with my vision...This experience will be transformative not only for my family and me but also for future employees, the marginalized members of our community, and their families. This is a significant milestone, and I am honored to be among the first to have this once in a lifetime opportunity. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone involved.
Provides our community members with more holistic home energy and home safety needs. I gained training and knowledge to utilize as I grow professionally. On the non-professional side, the training fueled my continued passion and interest in home performance.
This has impacted my business and my life so much. The things I've learned and the people I've connected with have been key i almost gave up. These training opened so many opportunities I am grateful.
These trainings have expanded my perspective as both a contractor and business owner.
These trainings have given me a greater understanding of what a home needs to be more efficient and healthy

Energy Trust and the Broader Funding and Program Ecosystem

Energy Trust is an independent nonprofit organization funded by customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural Gas, and Avista. Established by Oregon's legislature more than 20 years ago, Energy Trust provides energy programs, financial incentives, technical guidance, contractor engagement, and community-based partnerships. Its mission is to help the listed utilities' ratepayers benefit from energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.

Energy Trust plays an important role in shaping the residential energy efficiency and home performance market in Oregon. For example, its Trade Ally Network program provides contractors with access to training, program information, technical support, and customer leads, which in turn helps customers identify contractors who are familiar with their program requirements and quality standards. To encourage more diversity in the field and support local small businesses, Energy Trust has also created a Contractor Development Pathway program, and financially supports several local contractor organizing groups that represent the interests of culturally specific and industry-specific business growth. In this way, Energy Trust functions as both a market actor and a connector, helping translate policy and utility investments into real projects in homes across the state.

However, Energy Trust is only one part of a broader and increasingly complex clean energy ecosystem. Public investments from sources such as state workforce development grants, federal grants, and other philanthropic funding streams are expanding in a piecemeal fashion, and also support contractor development and workforce training. As previously mentioned, the

Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund adds a hyper-local, consistent and long-term funding stream to the industry. This significant contribution to the local industry also affects the balance of resources between Portland's populous and diverse metropolitan center and the state's more sparsely populated and geographically-broad rural territories.

Collectively, these investments are creating new opportunities to grow the workforce, reach underrepresented communities, and connect energy efficiency work to the state's broader goals related to climate resilience, affordability, racial equity, and health. However, many of the funding sources that used to be reliable are increasingly inconsistent. As federal funding in the mid-2020s becomes less predictable, Oregon's energy stakeholder groups are working to navigate both the changing economic forecast and the workforce implications. Additional funding streams inevitably increase the complexity of program and reporting requirements, racial equity investments, and coordination needs that training providers, contractors, and community-based organizations must navigate.

Workforce Funding and Coordination Challenges

While funding is often available for participant training and certification activities fewer resources are dedicated to the organizational infrastructure required to sustain workforce development efforts. Curriculum development, instructor recruitment, partnership management, data tracking, facility operations, and participant support services are all essential components of successful workforce programs, yet these functions are often underfunded despite being critical to long-term impact.

For workforce development organizations such as ECC, this ecosystem offers both opportunity and complexity. On one hand, utility programs, public funding, and community-based initiatives can reinforce one another by creating demand for trained workers, increasing access to funding, and expanding the number of organizations involved in implementation. On the other hand, workforce development funding is often fragmented, time-limited, and tied to different program objectives, making it difficult to sustain training infrastructure, participant supports, and long-term planning. As a result, it is important to view workforce development as shared market infrastructure rather than a stand-alone program. A more coordinated ecosystem—one that aligns Energy Trust, public funders, statewide actors, community-based organizations, contractors, and training providers—can better support the long-term workforce capacity needed for Oregon's evolving home performance market.

The Role of Energy Trust in Workforce Development

To overcome these workforce funding and coordination challenges, Energy Trust has committed additional resources to supporting the growth of local trade contractors, community-based organizations, and their workforce. In its 2026–2030 Multiyear Plan, Energy Trust has prioritized workforce development program resources and community investments. With the additional resources budgeted, the organization is taking a proactive role in organizing the players in this complex funding ecosystem (Energy Trust of Oregon 2026). The mission of Energy Trust's new workforce development team is to identify regional resource gaps and complementary opportunities, and to coordinate with state-wide partners to address them.

One of Energy Trust's first acts under this new directive was to fund the early capacity of EnerCity Collaborative and the creation of its BPI training center in Portland. Starting in 2026, new investments in its Community Partner Network (CPN) are designed to improve the

experience of local community-based organizations (CBO's) that support Energy Trust program delivery. The CBO program delivery model facilitates reaching under-served communities throughout the state by empowering local organizations to support their own community to participate in Energy Trust programs. Two features of the new CPN model will be coordinated, practical workforce training in building science skills (including BPI certifications) and sponsorship of community-led workforce initiatives.

Employment Outcomes and Workforce Pipeline Indicators

Diversity and inclusion goals are met not by simply providing equitable access to training, but through the outcomes of equitable and sustained employment and career advancement. Stronger evaluation should not only count the number of people trained or certified, but also consider whether participants secure employment, what roles they enter, whether those roles offer quality wages and advancement opportunities, and whether workers remain in the industry over time.

At present, the available outcome data in this paper provide meaningful indicators on participation, demographics, and training experience, but they do not reflect long-term placement and retention. ECC has documented high participation among BIPOC learners, strong representation of women and non-binary participants, and consistently positive participant satisfaction ratings. Stronger long-term tracking would make it possible to understand how early outcomes translate into employment, advancement, and sustained participation in Oregon's clean energy economy.

Future evaluation should track enrollment, completion, certification attainment, job placement, retention, wage progression, movement into advanced credentials or responsibilities, and employer demand for graduates. For CBO staff, it will also be important to track whether participants move into contractor roles, utility-related positions, entrepreneurship pathways, or other occupations that contribute to the broader home performance ecosystem. Acquiring this type of longitudinal data will be a logistical challenge.

Energy Trust is currently evaluating Oregon's workforce landscape to better understand how many workers, by trade and experience level, may be needed statewide. Broader state and regional analyses provide directional insights, but projections will likely remain uncertain given recent economic volatility, policy shifts, and changing federal funding conditions. This uncertainty reinforces the need for adaptable workforce planning and durable support systems rather than one-time investments.

Statewide Coordination and System Alignment

Because Oregon's workforce ecosystem extends far beyond any single program or funder, statewide coordination is vitally important to the success of these investments. The scale of the energy transition requires alignment across many actors, including utilities, state agencies, workforce investment boards, labor organizations, education and training providers, community-based organizations, contractors, and employers. Each of these entities plays a different role in preparing workers, funding programs, setting standards, shaping market demand, and connecting participants to jobs. Without stronger coordination, workforce development efforts even when well-funded, can become fragmented across regions, funding streams, and program objectives, and make it more difficult to build clear and durable pathways into the industry.

Recent statewide efforts suggest that Oregon is beginning to build the partnerships needed to address this challenge. The Oregon Clean Energy Workforce Coalition (OCEWC) brings together more than 100 organizations representing state, Tribal, and local governments, labor unions, workforce boards, employers, education providers, and community-based organizations to support a more coordinated and inclusive clean energy workforce strategy (Oregon Clean Energy Workforce Coalition 2026). This large-scale effort reflects a growing recognition that workforce development must be approached as a shared system rather than a collection of isolated programs.

For ECC and similar training providers, stronger statewide coordination can help improve consistency in competencies, credentials, referral pathways, and employer engagement while also reducing duplication and making better use of limited resources. Better alignment across utilities, public funders, labor and education partners, and community-based organizations can support more seamless transitions from outreach to training, from training to employment, and from initial job placement to long-term career advancement. Coordination also matters for equity. If statewide actors align around shared goals, inclusive recruitment strategies, voluntary demographic data practices, supportive services, and targeted investments in underrepresented communities, Oregon will be better positioned to build a workforce that both meets employer demand and reflects the communities the clean energy economy is intended to serve.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

ECC's experience demonstrates that certification alone is not sufficient to create workforce equity; it must be paired with mentorship, employer connections, supportive services, and advancement opportunities. At the same time, practical, certification-based training remains expensive and operationally complex, requiring sustained investment in curriculum, facilities, equipment, testing, support services, and instructor capacity. The strongest outcomes appear to emerge when technical training is embedded within a broader support model rather than treated as a stand-alone intervention.

For funders and program partners, the implication is that workforce development should be approached as shared market infrastructure. Long-term progress will depend on coordinated investment, stronger referral pathways from outreach to employment, more consistent outcome tracking, and statewide alignment among utilities, public agencies, contractors, labor and education partners, and community-based organizations.

Future efforts should prioritize sustainable funding for training infrastructure, clear employer engagement and business development strategies, improved data collection on placement and retention, and modular pathways that allow workers to build toward advanced credentials over time. These recommendations would help Oregon connect near-term training investments to durable careers and a more resilient home performance market overall.

Conclusion: Building a More Accessible Workforce Pathway

Looking ahead, Oregon may benefit from a more scaffolded regional approach to workforce development. This could include modular, task-based training that helps workers build toward more advanced credentials over time. Such an approach could lower barriers to participation and reduce the impact on training organizations such as ECC, while establishing a progressive training structure from which to grow an individual's career.

ECC's experience suggests that worker training certifications such as BPI are useful labor market tools, but they will only begin to address existing inequities when embedded in a broader system of inclusive training, supportive services, employer connection, and sustained public and utility investment. In that sense, the central challenge is not whether certification matters, but how Oregon can build a workforce system that makes high-quality training and durable career pathways more accessible to the people and communities the market has historically left out.

Furthermore, workforce diversity should be viewed not only as an equity objective, but as a strategy for strengthening community engagement and program delivery. As residential energy efficiency and healthy homes programs increasingly seek to serve diverse populations, a workforce that reflects the communities being served may be better positioned to build trust, improve communication, and help residents navigate available resources and opportunities.

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Used for: Research and editing.

Extent: Content and citations research.

Human review: The authors reviewed and verified all content, calculations, and citations.