



# COLORADO'S ENERGY FUTURE: THE 2024 OIL & GAS WORKER AND COMMUNITY TRANSITION REPORT

## WHY IT MATTERS

- Colorado is poised to lead the way in a Just Transition that puts workers and communities first.
- However, ongoing public investment, worker retraining, and community support are essential to make energy upgrades affordable, keep families together, and diversify local economies.

The 2024 Colorado Oil & Gas Worker and Community Transition Survey sheds light on the voices of oil and gas workers and the communities directly impacted by this industry, ensuring they play a central role in shaping Colorado's path forward.

**The transition to clean energy is here, and Colorado has the potential to lead the way in creating a future that supports both its workers and communities.**

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Job Transitions and Support:** Oil and gas workers, with an average of 7.5 years in the industry, report strong job quality yet express interest in transitioning to fields like solar energy, construction, and environmental remediation. They need short-term, affordable training options to successfully shift into new roles while supporting their families.
- **Community Support for Clean Energy:** Over 80% of community members believe in the potential of renewable energy to create job opportunities and drive economic growth. However, nearly 60% are unaware of current programs that help with energy efficiency and clean energy upgrades.
- **Policy and Public Investment Needs:** A just transition requires meaningful government support and policies that prioritize local economic growth, including fair wages, job retraining programs, and public investments in clean energy access. Surveyed workers and community members believe the government and unions should play an active role in planning this transition, emphasizing the importance of inclusive engagement in decision-making processes.
- **Concerns About Energy Costs and Climate Impacts:** Rising household energy costs and climate challenges like wildfires, drought, and extreme heat are top concerns for communities. Support for affordable clean energy and economic strategies to manage rising costs are critical.

# Local Policy Recommendations

Our report includes specific recommendations to address both worker and community needs, with a focus on creating a fair and sustainable energy future for Colorado.

**Here's how Colorado can support its workforce and communities in this transition.**

1

## Support for Unionization and Worker Representation

Barriers to unionization must be reduced to protect worker rights. Policies like card check neutrality and updates to the Colorado Labor Peace Act are essential for building trust and improving communication with workers and organized labor.

2

## Investment in Workforce Development

Strategic investments in paid training and apprenticeship programs are critical. Expanding high-road career pathways—offering living wages, safe working conditions, and benefits—will support workers in sectors like solar and environmental remediation, giving them a path to success in emerging fields.

3

## Equitable Access Through Wraparound Services

Supporting workers with childcare, transportation, and access to training can help ensure that opportunities in new fields are accessible to all oil and gas workers, regardless of their personal circumstances.

4

## Local Government Standards for Job Quality

Encouraging local governments to set job quality standards, such as minimum wage and safe labor practices, helps workers achieve fair compensation and improved working conditions, laying the groundwork for a sustainable future.

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## Safety Net Programs for Workers

5

A feasibility study on benefits like extended healthcare coverage and pensions can help the state determine which supports will provide the greatest security for workers as they transition to new industries.

## Affordable Energy Efficiency Upgrades

6

Clean energy programs need to be more accessible, with targeted outreach to ensure that all communities understand the benefits of energy upgrades. Affordability is crucial to making these programs viable for everyone.

## Backfill Revenue Gaps from Oil and Gas

7

Local governments and school districts often depend on oil and gas property taxes. Tax policies should help offset this revenue loss, possibly through fees imposed on the industry, while supporting infrastructure like public transit and internet access.

## Enhanced Community Engagement

8

Colorado communities want to be involved in the planning process. Increasing public forums and in-person opportunities to discuss the energy transition will foster local solutions and ensure community support.

# Federal Policy Recommendations

Our report includes specific recommendations to address both worker and community needs, with a focus on creating a fair and sustainable energy future for Colorado. Here's what needs to be done at the Federal level to support the workforce and communities in this transition.

1

## Broaden the Definition of "Energy Community"

Expanding federal definitions of energy communities ensures that the hardest-hit areas receive the necessary resources for economic recovery and growth.

2

## Federal Tax Credits for Local Development

By supporting community benefit agreements and local development, federal tax credits can contribute to broad economic growth in transitioning areas.

3

## Historical Pollution Cleanup and Job Creation

Federal investments in pollution cleanup can generate thousands of jobs while improving local ecosystems, providing a win-win for communities and the environment.

4

## Legislation for Worker Rights

Passing the PRO Act to restore the right to unionize will open the door to better jobs, wages, and benefits, ensuring that clean energy jobs are high-quality opportunities.

5

## Repurposing Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Redirecting fossil fuel subsidies to support Just Transition initiatives will bolster local economies while making sustainable investments in workforce and community development.

# What We Learned

"When I started, every single rig we'd have at least two engineers responsible for this special equipment tool. But then I started seeing a shift. They started having these remote engineers call in.

Because of advanced technologies and better internet speeds, they had these engineers in a control room and they were able to direct the tools from Houston. The engineers were able to watch multiple rigs which meant they were hiring less engineers and getting the same amount of work done.

With these automations you need less people to do the same amount of jobs."

*- Oil and Gas Worker  
Arapahoe County*

"I am respectful of the economic opportunity that the industry provides but what's really important to me is that it's hazardous work. Without strong unions and strong labor organizing, workers often find themselves at the mercy of business decisions and decision makers in the industry with regard to what level of care you receive should you have an accident or even worst case be killed in this field, as well as the boom and bust nature of it all.

The decisions that are made to lay people off and how those decisions are made or what sort of implicit or explicit bias goes into those decisions is really concerning. I am concerned for the Latino population where folks can be let go a little more easily coming from a marginalized community."

*- Environmental Protection Specialist  
Garfield County*

"I do believe that most workers at the base of this situation it's not that they are 'pro-oil and gas' its just that they want to work and feed their families and those are the good jobs to do it."

*- Oilfield Worker  
Weld County*

"We would be better off not retraining workers but diverting future workers into more productive fields of work."

*- Oilfield Worker Weld  
County*

"I have not looked into anything like electric vehicles or solar panels for me because I think even with government help, it would still be more expensive than what I have now."

*- Community Member  
Aurora*

"Helping communities have their own voices in matters related to their own futures, rather than having those futures decided for them, is the best thing we have done so far."

*- Wade Buchanan  
Director of the Office of Just  
Transition*