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# Protecting Our Future: Tools for Sustainable Businesses to Support Equitable Workforce Development

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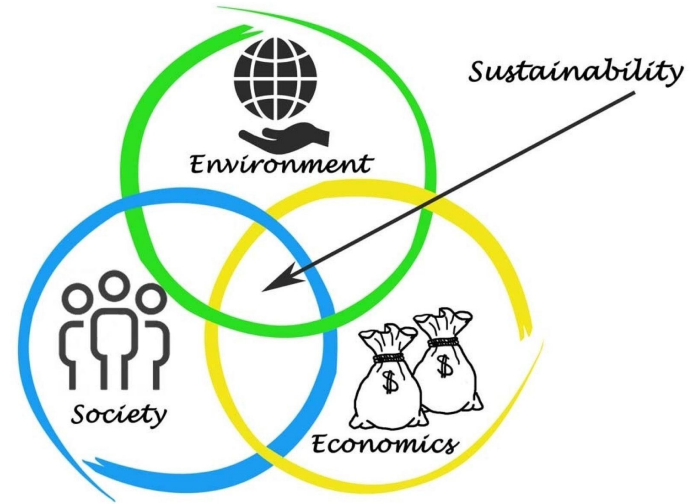
# Sustainable Practices



- Common themes:
  - reducing waste
  - conserving energy
  - responsible materials sourcing
- Renewables firms:
  - Improving carbon offset
  - Providing reliability and resilience
- All methods to achieve impact

# The Importance of Sustainable Businesses

- Business and sustainability aren't separate
- Unsustainable business is bad business
- Bad business has a human cost
- An equitable workforce is integral to sustainability



# Lack of Equity Derails Sustainability



- Impact of unsustainable practices is inequitably distributed
  - Women are disproportionately impacted by all of the challenges highlighted in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
  - Indigenous disenfranchisement
- Environmental issues can’t be resolved without equity
  - Seemingly good policies fail:
    - Public transport: Optimizing for traditional 9-to-5 commutes rather than school pickup routes, accessibility, safety
    - Carbon pricing or taxes: Regressive burden for economically disenfranchised.
  - Similarly, in one case, climate-driven efforts to install “clean” cooking stoves were discontinued when organizers realized their impact on emissions was smaller than initially expected, disregarding the unexpected positive byproduct that these stoves improved women’s and children’s health and safety.

# Impacts = Results of Living Into Culture

- Business is based on a calculation
- Bad math exists:
  - Failing to include human inputs
  - Underestimating far more common
- Culture is set by leadership but put into practice by staff
  - Only 7% of Americans are owners



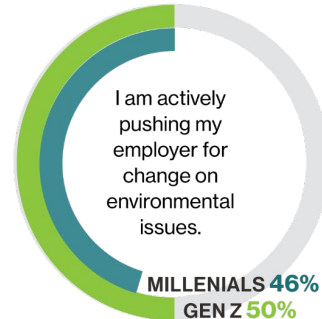
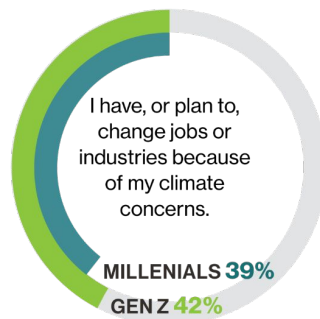
## Workforce Development is Key

- Working life vast majority of your life
- Role models
- Generational impact
- Expertise and influence
- People know their communities best
- Business actively engage out of necessity
- Businesses serve “boring” logistics
- Commercial capital has more impact

# Benefits to Industry

- Companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity are 36% more likely to outperform their peers financially
- Gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to see higher financial returns.
- Productivity: Inclusive teams are over 35% more productive.
- New markets: Diverse companies are 70% more likely to capture new markets
- Equity leads to higher retention rates and reduced turnover by fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees.... Even those not from marginalized communities.

## Gen Z and millennials are factoring ESG into career decisions



Source: Compiled by MIT Technology Review Insights with data from Deloitte, 2023.

## What Can An Employee Do?

- Raise the issue
- Support those raising the issue
- Expect, Inquire, Inspect
- Hold yourself and others accountable
- Offer what you can
- Invite the uninvited
- Be open to unique solutions
- Show up where you rarely go



# What Can Your Organization Do?

- Inquire as to real goals
- Have a strategy
- Invest resources
- Have a policy
- Track outcomes
- Acknowledge issues / course correct



# Training: NABCEP

## Overview

- **Definition:** NABCEP is the most widely recognized certification organization for North American solar professionals.
- **Mission:** To develop and implement quality credentialing and certification programs for professionals in the renewable energy industry.

## Benefits

- **Training Programs:** NABCEP partners with over 100 educational institutions to provide accessible training programs, ensuring a wide reach and inclusivity.
- **Community Outreach:** NABCEP's initiatives include targeted outreach programs in underserved communities, resulting in a 20% increase in certification participation from these areas.
- **Diversity in Certification:** 35% of NABCEP-certified professionals come from underrepresented groups, including women and minorities.
- **Job Placement:** 85% of NABCEP-certified individuals find jobs within three months of certification.
- **Salary Increase:** NABCEP-certified professionals earn, on average, 15% higher salaries compared to their non-certified counterparts.
- **Career Advancement:** 70% of certified individuals report career advancement opportunities within a year of certification.

# Certifications: B Corp



## Overview

- **Definition:** B Corp Certification is a designation that a business meets high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials.
- **Criteria:** Businesses must score well on treatment of workers, customers, community, and environment.
- **Global Reach:** Over 3,500 certified B Corporations in 74 countries across 150 industries.
- **Examples:** Ben & Jerry's, Patagonia

## Benefits

- **Brand Differentiation**
- **Attracting Talent**
- **Investment Opportunities**
- **Community Impact**

## Lessons Learned

- **Transparency**
- **Continuous Improvement:**
- **Employee Satisfaction:** B Corps report a 14% higher employee satisfaction rate compared to non-certified businesses.
- **Environmental Impact:** B Corps are 2.5 times more likely to reduce their carbon footprint compared to traditional businesses.
- **Community Impact:** 82% of B Corps engage in initiatives to support local communities, compared to 52% of traditional businesses.



# Community Partnerships

**Description:** Collaborating with local organizations to create employment pathways.

**Benefits:** Strengthens community ties and supports local economic development.

**Examples:** Partnerships with schools, workforce development agencies, and nonprofits to provide job training and placement services.

**Statistics:**

- A study by the Urban Institute found that community partnership programs increased local employment rates by 15%.
- Businesses that engage in community partnerships report a 30% increase in community trust and support.
- Workforce development initiatives in collaboration with local organizations lead to a 40% higher job placement rate for participants.

# Partner Organizations: Grid Alternatives



## Overview

- **Definition:** Grid Alternatives is a nonprofit organization that brings solar power and solar jobs to underserved communities.
- **Mission:** To make renewable energy technology and job training accessible to underserved communities.
- **Programs:** Includes Solar Installation Training, Tribal Program, International Program, and Women in Solar.
- **Impact:** Installed over 16,000 solar systems, providing over \$480 million in lifetime savings for low-income households.

## Benefits

- **Community Empowerment**
- **Environmental Impact**
- **Economic Savings**
- **Workforce Development**

## Statistics

- **Workforce Development:** Over 30,000 people trained through Grid Alternatives' programs.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** 60% of trainees come from underrepresented groups in the solar industry.
- **Economic Impact:** Generated over \$250 million in wages for trainees and workers involved in their projects.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Grid Alternatives' installations have prevented the release of over 750,000 tons of greenhouse gases.
- **Community Engagement:** Partnered with more than 500 community organizations to deliver their programs, strengthening local support networks and engagement.

# Applied Education: Internships

## Internships

- **Description:** Providing paid internships targeted at underrepresented groups.
- **Benefits:** Offers hands-on experience and a pathway to full-time employment.
- **Examples:** Paid internships for women, minorities, and low-income students in renewable energy fields.
- **Statistics:**
  - According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 56% of students who intern with companies are offered full-time positions.
  - The Solar Foundation reports that internship programs in the solar industry have led to a 25% increase in workforce diversity.
  - Sustainable businesses with internship programs see a 20% higher retention rate among employees who start as interns.



# Educational Outreach

**Description:** Engaging with educational institutions to promote renewable energy careers.

**Benefits:** Raises awareness and interest in renewable energy among young people.

**Examples:** Sponsoring STEM programs, providing guest lectures, and offering scholarships.

**Statistics:**

- The Department of Education notes that schools with strong industry partnerships see a 50% increase in students pursuing careers in those fields.
- Educational outreach programs result in a 35% higher enrollment in renewable energy-related college courses.
- Companies that invest in educational outreach report a 25% boost in brand recognition and positive perception among young adults.



# Conferences and Seminars



**Description:** Hosting or participating in seminars and workshops focused on equitable workforce development.

**Benefits:** Shares knowledge, fosters industry collaboration, and highlights best practices.

**Examples:** Organizing seminars on diversity in the renewable energy sector, and participating in industry conferences with a focus on workforce equity.

**Statistics:**

- According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, industry conferences that focus on diversity and inclusion have led to a 30% increase in women and minority participation in the sector.
- Seminars and workshops on workforce development result in a 20% increase in collaboration between businesses and training institutions.
- Attendees of these conferences report a 40% higher implementation rate of equitable workforce practices within their organizations.