

## Experts red-hot over green jobs Feds spend \$8M to define trendy \$80B term

By Renee Dudley | Sunday, May 2, 2010 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Coverage

Although hundreds of millions in federal stimulus dollars are being funneled to the Bay State to create so-called green jobs, no government definition of "green job" exists, leaving watchdogs suspicious that tax money is being shoveled into projects that have little to do with the environment.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is working to establish an official definition, but it won't be finalized until next year, an official said. The bureau itself is spending \$8 million in stimulus funds just to define and quantify "green jobs."

"It's a triumph of public relations over economic analysis," said David G. Tuerck, executive director of the Beacon Hill Institute policy group at Suffolk University.

Of the \$80 billion being spent nationwide on green jobs as part of the Obama administration's \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, \$500 million has been sent to Massachusetts, a federal official said. Among the projects receiving "green" money are the renovations to the IRS center in Andover, major courthouses and numerous municipal buildings.



The spending - on so-called clean energy investments - is expected to create 720,000 jobs nationwide by the end of 2012, said U.S. Department of Energy spokeswoman Stephanie Mueller.

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources said it could produce no data on how many green jobs are being created in the state with stimulus money.

Andrew P. Morriss, a University of Illinois law professor who studies the green-jobs economy, worries about the lack of skepticism over the casually used term.

"If we don't have a definition, anyone can label anything a 'green job,'" he said. "You could be a lawyer, accountant or bureaucrat, but if you work for a 'green company,' you're in a green job. We need a definition before anything can make sense and to justify what we're spending on it."

Kenneth P. Green, an environmental scientist from the American Enterprise Institute, a right-leaning think tank in Washington, was also dubious about the term.

"People throw out numbers: 'X-number of green jobs have been created with stimulus money.' But these numbers are meaningless," Green said. "You have no definition. This number is made up for the sake of rhetoric."

When asked by the Herald to define "green jobs," a U.S. Department of Energy spokeswoman e-mailed a May 2008 article from Time magazine that discusses "green-collar jobs" in light of the 2008 presidential campaigns. The Energy Department alone received \$36.7 billion in stimulus funds.

Yet having a firm definition of a "green job" is essential to compiling statistics about how many such jobs exist, said Richard Clayton, a Bureau of Labor Statistics official. Clayton, who is helping define green job for the federal government, said firm employment numbers are needed to guarantee effective public policy.

"You need some way of quantifying green jobs," Clayton said. "You want a number to put it into context for public discussion."

This isn't the first time the labor bureau has suffered a definition crisis. "It's similar to the high-tech economy in the 1990s," Clayton said. "There was no formal definition of a high-tech job."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics drafted a proposal for defining the term, published last month in the Federal Register, that acknowledged "there is no widely accepted standard definition of green jobs."

Under the proposed definition, green jobs would include people who work for nonpolluting dry cleaning services or make hybrid cars and mercury-free batteries.

If a company is dedicated to making goods that are considered green, such as energy-efficient appliances, everyone in that firm, including production, management and administrative staff, would be considered to be in a green job.

Morriss rejected the scope of the proposed definition. "It's just nuts. A janitor at a green company is doing a green job even though he's not doing anything different than a janitor at a company down the street that's not green," he said.

Mark Muro, a fellow at the left-leaning Brookings Institution who is leading a nongovernment study to categorize green jobs, said such jobs should be included. "If an establishment is committed to producing a green product, everyone who works there is contributing to the green economy," he said.

The dispute highlights what Jerry Taylor of the Cato Institute, a Washington research group, called a public relations tactic. "Jobs aren't being created, they are just being rebranded," he said.

Muro acknowledged the challenges of defining the term: "Parts of a Prius are uniquely oriented to reducing carbon emissions, other parts are standard. It's hard to make good determinations."

Green, the American Enterprise Institute scientist, prefers to categorize the term simply. "Cleaning up muck? Green job. Someone who removes sludge from a river? Green job. Working at a wastewater treatment plant so waste won't go to a delta? Green job."

Still, "nothing is perfectly green," he said. "You could be driving heavy machinery to rake sand or using chemicals to treat water. Windmills are made in China, where environmental standards aren't enforced - and it takes massive amounts of concrete and steel to install them."

His solution? "Stop using the jargon."

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