



Opening Doors to Opportunities in the  
Green Economy:  
*Women's Entrepreneurship in Green  
Industries*

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Prepared for the  
U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau  
by Public Policy Associates, Incorporated  
and Wider Opportunities for Women

# Opening Remarks

Sara Manzano-Díaz, Director,  
U.S. Department of Labor,  
Women's Bureau



# **Economic Opportunity in Green Entrepreneurship**

Colleen Graber, Project Manager  
Public Policy Associates, Incorporated



# What is Entrepreneurship?

- Taking an idea to market
- Variation in size of endeavor
  - 🌳 Self-employment
  - 🌳 Single owner or joint venture
  - 🌳 Small business with few employees
  - 🌳 Large business with many employees
- Income-generating



# Green Industries

- Those that are fundamentally green:
  - 🌱 Agriculture/forestry
  - 🌱 Renewable energy
  - 🌱 Environmental protection
  - 🌱 Energy trading
  - 🌱 Recycling and waste reduction



## Green Industries *(continued)*

- Other industries have opportunities for greening of existing processes, services, and products, like:
  -  Transportation
  -  Consulting
  -  Manufacturing
  -  Construction
  -  Government



# Entrepreneurial Opportunities in the Green Economy

- Niches for women looking for small or large-scale opportunities
  - Consumer demand for green products and services increasing
  - Technology advancements

*“The entrepreneur is the one who sees the transition to clean technologies as one of the greatest opportunities in the history of business.”*  
– Robert Ludvig, “Clean Energy and Green Jobs in 2010”



# Entrepreneurial Opportunities in the Green Economy *(continued)*

- A few examples...
  - Green products
    - Made from recycled materials
    - Designed to be energy-saving
    - Organic foods
  - Green services
    - Energy auditing of homes and businesses
    - Installation of energy-saving systems

...of many



# How Green Entrepreneurship is Different

- Commitment to the environment
- Sometimes need to educate the consumer base
- Making products and services cost-effective for consumers
- Evolving nature of the technology and green economy



# Entrepreneurship Stakeholders

- Entrepreneur supports in your area
  - Small Business Technology Development Centers
  - Chambers of commerce
  - Community colleges
  - Universities
  - Economic development organizations
  - Business incubators
- Offerings of these organizations
  - Counseling on readiness, business plan development, financing options
  - Office and lab space
  - Entrepreneurship training programs, initial and growth stages
  - Connections to angel investors and other supports



# Helping Women Entrepreneurs

Julie Castro Abrams, Executive Director  
Women's Initiative for Self Employment



# Green Jobs

- Not just the high tech and alternative energy
- Women entrepreneurs think outside the box
- Environmental justice



# About Women's Initiative

- 20,000 women since 1988
- Serving: low-income women, multiple barriers
- Mission: economic self-sufficiency
- Results: income, assets, jobs, local economy



# Women Entrepreneurs

- Push and pull towards entrepreneurship
- Barriers to employment
- Want to be their own boss
- Give back to their community



# Women's Initiative Clients

- 85% report running socially responsible and/or green businesses
- 79% make large charitable gifts each year (\$1000+)
- 69% volunteer regularly



# Connecting and Supporting Women Entrepreneurs

- Working with community partners
- Business plan training
- Funding and credit building
- Ongoing business support services



# Taking a Different Path

Laura Culin, President/CEO  
Austin Lumber Co.



# Laura Culin: Background

- Lumber company was family business, but did not plan to enter it at first—grew up thinking construction was a “man’s job”
- Personal circumstances took her back to Austin, and she reconsidered joining the business
- Needed to find a niche to make the business her own and give it a unique edge



# Laura Culin: Education and Training

- Originally had a degree in fashion merchandising and marketing
- Certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE), Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Historically Underutilized Business (HUB)
- Forest Stewardship Council Certified



# Laura Culin: Help Sought and Received

- Sought advice and support from friends and family
- Joined National Association of Women in Construction
- Joined local Green Council chapter
- But also lots of personal initiative



# Laura Culin: Lessons Learned

- Get certified early
- Join professional associations
- Take continuing education courses
- Create and update your business plan
- Use social media
- Get involved and volunteer in local community colleges, green organizations



# Becoming a Green Entrepreneur

Rebecca Lundberg, CEO

Powerfully Green

The logo for Powerfully Green features the word "Powerfully" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a stylized sun with a yellow center and radiating lines. Below "Powerfully" is the word "Green" in a bold, green, sans-serif font, followed by a registered trademark symbol (®).

# Rebecca Lundberg: Background

- After 12 years teaching public school, wanted a career change
- Interested in topic of solar power
- Found that no companies in her area were equipped to serve residential customers



## Rebecca Lundberg: Education and Training

- Courses in Photovoltaic Design and Installation course and Advanced Photovoltaics course at Solar Energy International (SEI) in Paonia, Colorado
- General contractor's license (required in MN for her business model): independent study followed by computer-based test



## Rebecca Lundberg: Help Sought and Received

- Had a partner who shared her passion, helped provide focus, and contributed both physically and financially to the business
- Asked lots of questions of local officials and organizations



# Rebecca Lundberg: Lessons Learned

- Have a strong talent in their focus area
- Their focus area should be something that is not currently being adequately served
- Not be afraid to ask for help from authorities and associations
- Be kind, respectful, ethical, and generous with colleagues and customers



# Question and Answer Period





## U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau

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