

Commission on Fossil Fuel Workforce

Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2025

1:00 PM – 3:30 PM

ATTENDANCE		
Member	Affiliation	Attended on 6/5/25
Melissa Lavinson, <i>co-chair</i>	Executive Director, Office of Energy Transformation	X
Josh Cutler, <i>co-chair</i>	Undersecretary of Labor	X
Abel Vargas	President at Valley Home Insulation	X
Amy McGuire	Senior Director, Market Development at Highland Electric Fleets	
Ana Sofia	Senior Program Director at La Colaborativa	X
Dan Leary	President of Local 369 at Utility Workers Union-America (UWUA)	
Dave Keating	International Representative at International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)	
Frank Callahan	President, Massachusetts Building Trades Unit (MBTU)	
Greandoll Oliva	Youth Leader in Chelsea and Community Organizer with GreenRoots	X
Harry Brett	International Representative at United Association	
Jennifer Applebaum	Managing Director of Workforce Development at MassCEC	X
John Cook	President at Springfield Technical Community College	X
Kristen Gowin	Executive Manager at National Electrical Contractors Association of Greater Boston	X
Larry Lessard	Director at Achieve Renewable Energy, LLC	X
María Belén Power	Undersecretary of Environmental Justice & Equity	Delegate Crystal Johnson
Mark Melnik	Director, Economic & Public Policy Research at UMass Donahue Institute	
Meghan Leahy	Regional Vice President at Cogentrix Energy, LLC	
Mike Vartabedian	Assistant Directing Business Representative at International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers	X
Nikki Bruno	Vice President, Clean Technologies at Eversource Energy	X
Sarah Wilkinson	Commissioner of Division of Occupational Licensure and Office of Public Safety, Executive Office of Economic Development	X
Steve Finnigan	Sub District Director at United Steelworkers (USW)	Delegate Joe Endicott

Proceedings:

The meeting with the Special Commission of the Fossil Fuel Workforce commenced at 1:02 PM with Co-Chair Melissa Lavinson welcoming attendees and introducing Allisha Collins from National Grid. Allisha then presented on National Grid's New England Strategic Workforce Development, focusing on their Clean Energy Academies: Energy Infrastructure, Clean Energy Careers, Clean Energy Tech, and Clean Energy STEM Academies.

The overarching goal of these programs is to build a diverse talent pipeline through strong partnerships with educational institutions, training providers, and community organizations. The academies feature an 8-week structure, with an initial 4 weeks dedicated to work readiness with community partners, followed by 4 weeks of job shadowing and mentoring directly with National Grid. So far, 983 students have engaged statewide, 130 have graduated from the Energy Infrastructure Academy, and 81 individuals have been hired by National Grid or its partners. There are opportunities for expansion into roles such as customer services, IT, finance, and project management. National Grid is also developing a 4-week intensive program for high school students and has a collaboration with labor organizations in recruitment, preparedness, and retention efforts. National Grid notes that their program targets individuals without prior experience, with an average participant age of 30.

The Commission then broke out into smaller groups focused on three key report sections: 1) identifying occupational displacement risks, 2) future energy job needs, and 3) understanding existing skilled workforce available.

The first breakout group discussed that displacement is expected to extend beyond 2030 and suggested a color-coded data table for visualizing job changes by impact, with tangible examples like the MBTA fueler position being impacted by electrification. The consensus was to rely on MassCEC for data to support this table and section of the report.

The second breakout group proposed using MassCEC's workforce needs assessment, the Mass SAVE 3-year plan, and state climate goals (2020-2050) to project workforce needs, suggesting a scenario analysis in a table format to account for federal administration shifts, funding changes, and commodity prices. The consensus for the report's narrative was to build upon MassCEC data, acknowledge potential economic downturns, and underscore the need for a massive workforce given the state's current pace in achieving its climate goals.

The third breakout group revealed a perception of a "job shortage" rather than a "worker shortage," particularly for union members who are trained but lack sufficient work. A significant gap was identified in small-scale residential work, as the trained workforce is largely employed in larger commercial projects. Potential barriers discussed included pay discrepancies between commercial (high union wages) and residential sectors, licensing issues, and cultural factors like nepotism and networking. Community colleges, union-sponsored apprenticeships, and vocational schools were identified as key training providers, with an emphasis on supporting residential apprenticeships. The group agreed the report should identify issues and propose high-level conclusions and recommendations, highlighting worker needs and challenges. A strong emphasis

was placed on addressing the shortage of diversity in the workforce and encouraging companies to value cultural shifts.

The Commission then broke out into new small groups focused on three more key report sections: 1) existing apprenticeship programs and barriers to access, 2) existing training programs and barriers to access, and 3) educating educators/guidance counselors on opportunities.

The first breakout group discussed how geothermal fits into the workforce transition, since the field is newer and not as developed in terms of training programs available. Relationship-building and networking are important tools to get the word out about apprenticeship programs and to help land spots in some of these highly competitive programs. The group noted that MassHire is an important resource that is currently available, as well as the clean energy pre-apprenticeship program offered by IBEW Local 103 for helping workers find and place in registered apprenticeship programs.

The second breakout group noted the need to overview relevant programs (e.g., MassCEC list, private offerings, union programs). Identified barriers to access for training programs included re-training for transitioning from fossil fuel to clean energy work while still working full-time, a lack of infrastructure and funding for this transition, geography of training locations, language accessibility, retention issues (potentially needing social worker support), lack of stipends/paid training, and inaccessible locations via public transportation.

The third breakout group noted that the goal is to ensure students, young people, educators, and counselors understand clean energy opportunities and the required skills and trainings. A system-level approach was recommended, leveraging existing structures like MY CAP for career path decision-making and the Connecting Activities program. The group proposed working with vocational high schools to update frameworks for clean energy skills, noting that existing programs (e.g., summertime bridge programs) need more funding and scale. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) were highlighted as critical for reaching parents and students, addressing language barriers, and linking families to career strategies, emphasizing that youth need paid programming to participate. Several systemic changes were identified as opportunities: MCAS no longer being a graduation standard (opening career pathways), lottery-based vocational high school acceptance (increasing access for underrepresented groups), and the increased availability of free community college (requiring stronger alignment with trades pipelines). The importance of normalizing trade schools and jobs as viable college alternatives was stressed, which involves addressing negative messaging from some guidance counselors. Emphasis was placed on providing guidance counselors with information on crucial soft skills like punctuality, safety, and customer service, which are often overlooked. Finally, the discussion pointed out occupations without registered apprenticeships that struggle to find skilled people, and noted that businesses with high turnover and low wages need to be addressed. MassCEC has launched a climate careers curriculum for teachers, which will be shared as a resource.

Support staff will synthesize this input to draft a report for review and discussion. The next full Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 10th from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. The meeting adjourned at 3:31PM.