

Green Collar Jobs Are In

You say you want a career in the exciting new green economy but worry that you lack experience in the environmental field? No problem, says Barbra Batshalom, executive director of the Green Roundtable, a nonprofit that helps municipalities and organizations adopt environmentally sustainable practices. Batshalom spoke on May 20, at **Green Careers I: Green Building**, the first in a series of panel discussions on sponsored by Careers Moves at JVS.

“Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there,” Batshalom told the 35 young and mid-career professionals in the audience, *“even if where you want to go isn’t exactly what your background has prepared you for. The more passionate, the more grounded, the more focused you are, the better off you are, so that might compensate for things you perceive to be holes in your background.”* Batshalom encouraged attendees to look at their skills with an eye toward which ones might be transferable to a green career. *“If you’re a green design expert but you’re a bad project manager and a bad communicator, that won’t help you,”* she said. *“If you’re a fabulous communicator and a very good manager but you’re light on the environmental stuff, those core skills of being professional are really valuable in this market.”* Citing a shortage of professionals with environmental expertise, Batshalom said that hiring managers in green businesses *“expect a learning curve [more...](#)”*

“The vast majority of jobs in the green sector are the same jobs as in the non-green sector,” added Wanda Reindorf, chief financial officer at the Conservation Services Group which designs and develops innovative energy efficiency and renewable energy programs that lower energy use and cut costs. For example, she said, most green businesses need professionals with expertise in things like finance, marketing, sales, human resources, law, and accounting. *“If you’re a financial analyst, you might be counting carbon credits,”* Reindorf said. *“A lot of the skills you’ll use will be the same ones you’ve already been using in the non-green sector.”* To those just starting their professional careers, she suggested, *“Pay attention to what drives you. Is it policy? Is it economics? Is it sales? Supplement whatever drives you with the training that would be useful to the green sector.”*

Also speaking was Brad Swing, director of energy policy for the City of Boston. Formerly a practicing attorney, Brad is currently involved in many of Mayor Menino’s green energy initiatives, including coordinating the design and construction of the City’s first green building. Panelist Aaron Desatnik, a recent college grad, who organizes events and coordinates marketing for NEXUS/Green Roundtable, encouraged those starting their careers to volunteer in environmental organizations, as he has done. Kevin Doyle, the panel’s moderator, is the principal of Green Economy, a firm that consults to both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. He is a frequent speaker at colleges across the country, and is the author of several books about environmental careers. Doyle also writes for grist.org, an environmental website.

The event took place at NEXUS Green Building Resource Center, one of Boston’s newest green workspaces.

Our next panel presentation, on careers in alternative energy, will be held on Thursday, September 25th at Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 126 High Street, Boston, from 6:00-8:00 pm. For information or to register, http://jvsjobs.org/events/monthly_schedule.htm