

# TEN GREEN BUSINESS IDEAS FOR NEW ENTREPRENEURS

GREEN FOR ALL CAP GREEN BUSINESS CONTENT



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# INTRODUCTION

For almost half a century, environmentalists have been advocating for big businesses to incorporate sustainability principles into their practices. Yet even ten years ago, it was rare to hear of any business with dedicated green, environmental, or sustainability initiatives (outside of those designed to protect them from regulatory fines and other liability for polluting activities). Today green has gone mainstream. It is big business. A recent study by The Pew Charitable Trusts found clean-energy technology outpaced all other sectors in job growth and investments, even during the recession. A number of other trends also point to the increasing premium the private sector is placing on environmental outcomes, including the growth of the market for green building materials<sup>1</sup> and reports that a high percentage of consumers are purchasing environmentally friendly products.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Pew report predicts that government and private investments are creating “tremendous potential” for the green economy in the future.<sup>3</sup>

America currently faces two historic sets of challenges, one to our economy and the other to our environment. In February 2010, 14.9 million Americans were unemployed.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, people here and across the world are facing increasingly dire immediate and impending impacts of climate change, such as disastrous droughts, melting arctic ice, and ever more destructive storms.<sup>5</sup>

The emerging clean-energy economy can solve both sets of problems. It has the potential to drive innovation and stimulate a sustainable economic recovery that changes the environmentally harmful “business as usual” practices of the past. Where other people might see problems and crises, innovative green business leaders see opportunity. A wave of companies both large and small is using success in business to achieve social and environmental change. These emerging business models seek to preserve environmental quality, promote social equity, and stimulate sustainable economic growth.

For example, major corporations like Walmart and Clorox are leading the way with

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1. Retrieved from [http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home/permalink/?ndmViewId=news\\_view&newsId=20090604005585&newsLang=en](http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home/permalink/?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20090604005585&newsLang=en) on November 12, 2009.

2. A study conducted by Green Seal Inc. and EnviroMedia found that 82% of consumers say they buy green products and services, 60% are looking for minimally packaged goods and 58% are buying green cleaning products. Retrieved from <http://www.enviro-media.com/enviroblog/?tag=education-gap> on November 12, 2009.

3. Retrieved from [http://www.pewtrusts.org/news\\_room\\_detail.aspx?id=53254](http://www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=53254) on November 12, 2009

4. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t10.htm> on March 5, 2010.

5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/17/science/earth/17drought.html>. [http://www.ucusa.org/global\\_warming/science\\_and\\_impacts/science/hurricanes-and-climate-change.html](http://www.ucusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/science/hurricanes-and-climate-change.html). <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/03/070315161102.htm>.

sustainability initiatives<sup>6</sup> and the development of successful green products<sup>7</sup> that are less toxic and reduce impacts on human and environmental health. Google and Intel launched the Climate Savers Computing Initiative, which brings industry and government leaders together with consumers and conservation groups to help drive efficient computing practices and innovations in hardware design.<sup>8</sup>

Small businesses are leading in their own way, gaining media attention, securing investments, and capturing market share with innovative business solutions to environmental and social problems. For example, The Garden Project in San Francisco<sup>9</sup> is a great model for community-based change. With a mission to combat unemployment and improve urban environments, the Garden Project offers training and education programs for at-risk youth and former offenders, while also transforming inner cities with greening projects that reintroduce native and edible plants. In the Pacific Northwest, fast food chain Burgerville<sup>10</sup> is an excellent example of a for-profit business, founded on sound environmental and social principles, succeeding in the market while contributing to sustainable local economies. Burgerville purchases 100% renewable wind energy for all of its locations and offers healthcare benefits and leadership mentoring programs for all full- and part-time employees.

In many ways, small business owners and entrepreneurs will be key to solving the economic and environmental challenges we face. Though each may have only a few employees, small businesses as a whole provide more than 70% of U.S. jobs. The immense scale of this economic activity gives such enterprises the ability to drive environmental and economic recovery efforts. And the very difficulty of these economic times will likely produce a new wave of businesses that can shoulder a significant portion of the country's wealth- and job-creation responsibilities. A recent study published by the Kauffman Foundation found that more than half of the companies on the 2009 Fortune 500 list began during a recession.<sup>11</sup> The report further suggests that job creation from startups is less volatile in economic downturns than job creation in the economy as a whole. At times like these, entrepreneurs show the way.

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6. Walmart, the world's largest retailer, announced a new sustainability index initiative that will require more than 100,000 of their suppliers globally to answer a set of questions related to their sustainability practices. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/16/business/energy-environment/16walmart.html> on November 11, 2009.

7. Since Clorox launched its biodegradable cleaning products brand "Green Works" in early 2008, it has become the #1 natural cleaning product brand. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS88912+12-Jan-2009+BW20090112> on November 12, 2009.

8. <http://www.climatesaverscomputing.org/media/whitepaper11302007.pdf>

9. <http://www.gardenproject.org>

10. <http://www.burgerville.com>

11. Kauffman Foundation report: <http://www.kauffman.org/uploadedFiles/the-economic-future-just-happened.pdf>

A number of trends show that the clean-energy economy is growing<sup>12</sup> and that consumer awareness of, and demand for, green products is on the rise.<sup>13</sup> It is a favorable environment for those looking to start green businesses. This guide is designed to help such entrepreneurs leverage this growing market and positively impact the environment and local economic development.

We hope that this guide inspires you to start your own green business, taking your economic fate into your own hands and creating positive change in the marketplace as well as your local community. We have identified ten different business segments, ranging from hand-made clothes to green construction, that are ripe for entrepreneurship. Which of these segments is best for you will depend on your location, background, and interests.

The suggestions in this guide are tailored to everyday Americans looking to start new enterprises. Instead of splashy, resource-intensive businesses like wind farms, we focus on opportunities that require only low to moderate capital investments. Many of you can start these businesses from your own home. Each opportunity gives entrepreneurs a chance to make a profit while tackling important environmental and social issues.

Emerging green enterprises hold great promise for creating green-collar jobs on a large scale, for preserving the environment, and for reinvigorating distressed urban economies. We hope this guide inspires you to develop a business plan and prepare to start one of these enterprises. As the successful examples at the end of the guide show, you can—with passion and hard work—find success in the clean-energy economy.

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12. Pew reports tremendous opportunity for the green economy based on increasing venture capital and government investments. Retrieved from: [http://www.pewtrusts.org/news\\_room\\_detail.aspx?id=53254](http://www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=53254) on November 12, 2009.

13. Organic food sales are increasing between 17-21% per year and a majority of consumers say they buy green products. Retrieved from: <http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/food.html>; <http://www.enviromedia.com/enviroblog/?tag=education-gap> on November 23, 2009.

# TEN GREEN BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:

## ENTERPRISES THAT PRESERVE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, IMPROVE SOCIAL EQUITY, AND STIMULATE LOCAL ECONOMIES

### 1. The Healthy, Local Food Movement

Americans are increasingly concerned about food safety, childhood obesity, and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with transporting food long distances to reach consumers. This concern creates an opportunity for organizations offering healthy food grown locally without the chemicals and pesticides that can damage human and environmental health. Starting such an enterprise is a great way to support your local economy, promote community health, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Urban farms and gardens also provide much-needed safe, outdoor areas for kids to play and interact with nature. To learn more about urban farming, please refer to the Green For All publication *Overview of Urban Farming*.<sup>14</sup>

#### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Café or Coffee Cart:** Sell organic, fair-trade coffee and tea at your own café or from a cart at local events.<sup>15</sup>
- **Coffee Roasting:** Roast and sell local, organic coffee.  
*Example: Sweetwater Organic Coffee in Gainesville, Florida*<sup>16</sup>
- **Urban farm or garden**<sup>17</sup>  
*Example: City Slicker Farms in Oakland, California*<sup>18</sup>
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program:** Grow healthy food, then sell memberships (or shares) to consumers, who in turn receive a designated allocation of seasonal produce throughout the farming season.  
*Example: Brick City Urban Farms in Newark, New Jersey*<sup>19</sup>
- **Local grocery store or cooperative**  
*Example: Oklahoma Food Cooperative in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*<sup>20</sup>

14. <http://www.greenforall.org/what-we-do/capital-access-program/overview-of-urban-farming>

15. The Green Restaurant Association offers guidelines: <http://www.dinegreen.com/>

16. <http://www.sweetwaterorganiccoffee.com>

17. Spin Farming offers additional resources: <http://www.spinfarming.com>

18. <http://www.cityslickerfarms.org/>

19. <http://brickcityurbanfarms.org/>

20. <http://oklahomafood.coop>

- **Organic restaurant or catering service**  
*Example: Back to Earth Catering in Berkeley, California<sup>21</sup>*
- **Garden Training:** Teach basic gardening skills to adults and youth so they can grow their own healthy food

## 2. Renewable Energy Alternatives, Green Collar Job Training, and Green Business Incubators

To curb global warming, we need to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and turn instead to alternative, renewable sources of energy on a large scale (e.g., solar, wind and geothermal energy). That will require a number of new policy regulations and tax incentives to promote the use of renewable energy by homeowners and businesses alike.<sup>22</sup> These governmental efforts, combined with general interest in clean energy, are expanding the market for such products and services. Emerging entrepreneurs can take advantage of this opportunity in a number of ways.

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Solar Installation:** Install solar panels or solar water heaters.<sup>23</sup>
- **Wind Turbines:** Distribute or install small wind turbines.<sup>24</sup>  
*Example: Mariah Power in Reno, Nevada, manufactures small wind turbines and is seeking distributors.<sup>25</sup>*
- **Job Training:** Whether as a for-profit business or a non-profit organization, train low-income residents to be the green-collar workers of the future.  
*Example: Veterans Green Jobs in Denver, Colorado<sup>26</sup>*
- **Green-Business Incubator:** Support first-time entrepreneurs aiming to solve environmental and social problems in their communities.  
*Example: Green Worker Cooperatives in the Bronx<sup>27</sup>*
- **Expand Access to Renewables:** Develop an innovative business model that increases access to renewable-energy technologies.  
*Example: One Block off the Grid in San Francisco harnesses community organizing to purchase solar technology at reduced rates.<sup>28</sup>*
- **Provide Renewables Directly:** Partner with state or federal programs<sup>29</sup> to

21. <http://www.organiccatering.com/>

22. For more information on tax incentives in your area: [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)

23. Information and training available: <http://www.greencareersguide.com/PV-Solar-Panel-Installer-Schooling-Training.html>; <http://www.bootsontheroof.com/>

24. Additional information provided by the American Wind Energy Association: <http://www.awea.org/>; Small wind installation training program information: <http://www.greencareersguide.com/Wind-Programs.html>; <http://www.treehugger.com/files/2009/03/kalamazoo-cc-offers-first-wind-turbine-installer-training-in-us.php>, [http://www.windpoweringamerica.gov/small\\_wind.asp](http://www.windpoweringamerica.gov/small_wind.asp)

25. <http://www.mariahpower.com>

26. <http://veteransgreenjobs.org>

27. <http://greenworker.coop>

28. <http://1bog.org/>

29. For example, California's Single-Family Affordable Solar Homes (SASH) Program: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/energy/Solar/sash.htm>

provide renewable-energy alternatives to low-income communities, reducing their electricity bills. *Example: GRID Alternatives in Oakland, California*<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Green Transportation

Many forms of transportation (such as traditional, gasoline-engine cars) contribute to climate change by releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Gas-powered cars also create smog in our cities, which can harm overall public health. Starting a business that offers alternative transportation solutions can benefit both the environment and community health. You can do this in any number of ways, from something as simple as fixing up old bikes to something more ambitious like starting up a green cab company in your city.

#### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Electric Bike and Scooter Dealership**<sup>31</sup>
- **Refurbishing Bicycles:** Refurbish and sell used bikes.  
*Example: Bikes 4 Life in Oakland, California*<sup>32</sup>
- **Community Bike-Share Program**<sup>33</sup>  
*Example: SmartBike DC*<sup>34</sup>
- **Green Cab Company:** Use hybrid vehicles to help people get where they're going.
- **Promoting Alternative Transportation:** Start a non-profit to find innovative ways to promote alternative forms of transportation.  
*Example: Nuride offers rewards (e.g., restaurant coupons, retailer discounts, tickets to shows) to online community members for transportation choices that reduce greenhouse gases.*<sup>35</sup>
- **Car-Sharing Program**<sup>36</sup>

### 4. Green Product Innovation and Consumer Goods Retail

Consumers are becoming more aware of the health and environmental impacts of the products they use every day (e.g., the enormous amounts of water and pesticides required to produce cotton).<sup>37</sup> Demand for safe, effective, non-toxic products that do not harm the environment is steadily growing. Opportunities abound for innovative entrepreneurs to meet this demand with home-based businesses.

30. <http://www.gridalternatives.org>

31. Additional information on electric bikes and scooters for resale: <http://www.electric-bikes.com/>

32. <http://bikes4life.com/>

33. International Bike Fund resources for community bike share programs: <http://www.ibike.org/encouragement/freebike.htm>

34. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/27/us/27bikes.html>; <http://www.smartbike.com>

35. <http://www.NuRide.com>

36. Guide to starting a car-sharing program: [http://www.citycarshare.org/download/CCS\\_BCCtYC\\_Long.pdf](http://www.citycarshare.org/download/CCS_BCCtYC_Long.pdf)

37. Retrieved from: <http://ks.water.usgs.gov/pubs/fact-sheets/fs.022-98.html>; [http://www.ota.com/organic/environment/cotton\\_environment.html](http://www.ota.com/organic/environment/cotton_environment.html) on November 23, 2009.



### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Organic Clothes:** Design and produce organic clothes for babies and adults using sustainable materials like organic cotton and natural dyes.  
*Example: WilloToons in San Francisco, California*<sup>38</sup>
- **Online Retail:** Take advantage of a growing market by selling goods online, such as sustainable baby goods or green home and bath products.  
*Example: Black Energy in Atlanta, Georgia*<sup>39</sup>
- **Natural Make-Up and Body Care:** Market all-natural make-up and body care products, made from organic ingredients and not tested on animals.  
*Example: Sweet Beginnings in Chicago, Illinois*<sup>40</sup>
- **Green Everyday Products:** Develop daily-use products that help consumers cut their greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and reduce their exposure to toxins.  
*Example: reusable water bottles, biodegradable containers, biodegradable trash bags*

### 5. Green Home- and Office-Cleaning Services

As awareness about the health and environmental impacts of toxic substances grows, so does the demand for fewer toxins in the home and workplace. Toxic cleaning agents can be harmful to humans, particularly janitors, house cleaners, and residents in buildings where volatile organic compounds (VOC) may affect indoor air quality. Some toxic ingredients in cleansers not only can harm those in the buildings where they are used, but can pollute the greater environment and adversely impact community water quality as well.<sup>41</sup> Many businesses are implementing new sustainability initiatives that address employee health, create safe workplaces, and reduce the environmental impacts of their operations. These businesses, as well as concerned residents, are creating a market for cleaning companies that use environmentally friendly cleaning products and techniques.<sup>42</sup>

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Green Housecleaning:** Offer green housecleaning services using all-natural and biodegradable cleaning supplies.<sup>43</sup>  
*Example: Home Green Home in San Francisco, California*<sup>44</sup>
- **Green Janitorial Services:** Offer green janitorial service for offices or schools.  
*Example: EnviroClean USA in Atlanta, Georgia*<sup>45</sup>

38. <http://shop.willotoons.com/>

39. <http://www.blackenergy.com>

40. <http://www.beelinestore.com/index.html>

41. Retrieved from: <http://www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/cleaning.htm> on November 23, 2009

42. For additional information on products and techniques:

[http://www.greenseal.org/certification/proposed\\_env\\_std\\_for\\_cleaning\\_svcs.pdf](http://www.greenseal.org/certification/proposed_env_std_for_cleaning_svcs.pdf) ;

[http://www.greeningschools.org/resources/view\\_resource.cfm?id=773](http://www.greeningschools.org/resources/view_resource.cfm?id=773);

<http://www.westp2net.org/Janitorial/factsheets/carpetcleaning.htm>

43. Article on how to start a green house cleaning business: [http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Start-a-House-Cleaning-Business-Under-\\$200.00&id=5122](http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Start-a-House-Cleaning-Business-Under-$200.00&id=5122)

44. <http://www.homegreenhomesf.com/>

45. <http://www.envirocleanusa.org/>

- **Train and Certify Green Cleaners:** Start a training and certification program for low-income residents to open their own green cleaning businesses, or to green their existing cleaning businesses with new products and techniques.  
*Example: Urban Solutions in San Francisco, California*<sup>46</sup>

## 6. Become Part of the ReUse Revolution!

Recycling is a great alternative to throwing things away, but reusing materials is even better. Making new consumer goods from landfill-bound materials reduces waste, preserves space in overflowing landfills, and curbs global warming. Remaking consumer goods (also called upcycling) is also becoming hip as entrepreneurs find ways to make fashion statements with recycled clothing and salvaged furniture. And a niche market is growing within the construction industry for used building materials.

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Salvage:** Become a salvage expert, removing, selling, and installing used building materials for a profit.<sup>47</sup>  
*Example: Heritage Salvage in Petaluma, California*<sup>48</sup>
- **Furniture:** Make furniture out of scrap materials, or refurbish old furniture to be sold as improved.
- **Clothes:** Design and produce clothes from recycled or used fabrics.<sup>49</sup>  
*Example: Ekologic in Troy, New York*<sup>50</sup>

## 7. Energy-Efficient Homes and Green Building Retrofits

With energy costs rising at an alarming rate, many homeowners and businesses are turning to efficiency experts to help them reduce their monthly utility bills. Increasing efficiency not only cuts costs, it also helps the environment. American buildings are responsible for one-third of the country's annual greenhouse gas emissions; they consume more than 60% of America's electricity. Constructing and operating buildings also takes an environmental toll, requiring large amounts of raw materials and water.<sup>51</sup> By bringing existing buildings up to current standards, we can avoid constructing new buildings, drastically reducing raw materials consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Public and private investors are working to expand the opportunities in this field further. For example, John Doerr, a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, was recently quoted in the *New York Times* proposing a "Cash for Caulkers" program akin to the successful "Cash for Clunkers" automobile trade-in program. "Cash for Caulkers" is the kind of policy innovation we are seeing more of—putting unemployed contractors and construction

46. <http://www.urbansolutionssf.org/>

47. The ReUse People in Oakland, CA offer demolition training and certification for used building materials: <http://thereuse-people.org/>

48. <http://www.heritagesalvage.com>

49. Article: <http://earth911.com/blog/2009/07/13/recycled-clothing-remade-to-last/>

50. <http://www.ekologic.com/>

51. Retrieved from: <http://www.cec.org/greenbuilding/> on November 23, 2009.

workers back to work making America's homes more energy efficient.<sup>52</sup> A number of tax incentives already encourage businesses and homeowners to make energy-efficiency upgrades to their buildings,<sup>53</sup> and more incentives are likely in the future.

Those with backgrounds in construction, roofing, electrical engineering, or architecture have a range of opportunities to start new businesses in the booming green building and energy-efficiency fields. Those with little or no experience have the chance to gain skills and create their own career opportunities.

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Energy Audits:** Offer energy audits that help homeowners and businesses improve energy efficiency and save money on their utility bills.<sup>54</sup>
- **Duct Cleaning and Repair:** Improve indoor air quality and seal up leaks, which increases energy efficiency.<sup>55</sup>
- **Green Retrofits:** Perform energy-efficiency and green building retrofits (e.g., weatherization, solar panel installation and solar thermal installation) to help building owners reduce their energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions while increasing the value of their property.<sup>56</sup>  
*Example: Recurve in San Francisco, California*<sup>57</sup>
- **Cool Roofing:**<sup>58</sup> Install cool roofs, made from materials that reflect the sun's heat instead of allowing a building to absorb that heat. Cool roofs increase energy efficiency and reduce the heat-island effect in urban areas. Cool roof installations comply with green building codes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Green Roofing:**<sup>59</sup> Install green roofs (or "living roofs") covered with vegetation and soil. Green roofs have many environmental and energy-efficiency benefits, helping reduce urban air temperatures, providing building insulation, and creating habitat for wildlife.
- **Green Building Products:** Supply green building products to the growing green construction industry  
*Example: EpOxyGreen in Venice, California*<sup>60</sup>

52. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/18/business/economy/18leonhardt.html> on November 23, 2009.

53. For additional information on tax incentives in your area: <http://www.dsireusa.org>

54. For additional information and training: [http://www.businessweek.com/investor/content/dec2005/pi2005121\\_4811\\_pi001.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/investor/content/dec2005/pi2005121_4811_pi001.htm); Home energy audit training: <http://www.alternate-energy-sources.com/home-energy-audit.html>; <http://denbyenergy.com/>

program-comparison

55. For information on duct cleaning: <http://www.mysmallbiz.com/low-cost-business/duct-cleaning-business.php>

56. Build It Green promotes green building practices in California: <http://builditgreen.org/>

57. <http://www.sustainablespace.com>

58. The Cool Roofing Council provides information on industry products: <http://www.coolroofs.org/>

59. Green Roofs for Healthy Cities provides green roof information and accreditation: <http://www.greenroofs.org/index.php/eduprogram>; See also: <http://www.dcgreenworks.org>

60. <http://www.epOxyGreen.com>

## 8. Green Landscaping and Green Plumbing

People with backgrounds in plumbing or landscaping are in high demand as buildings look to conserve water and reduce their energy consumption. Water and energy efficiency are prerequisites for the increasingly valuable LEED certification, expanding demand for these services even further. Many consumers are also considering alternatives to grass lawns, which require significant amounts of water (about one third of residential water use in America)<sup>61</sup> and chemicals to maintain. Gas-powered mowers make grass lawns even bigger environmental liabilities, polluting as much in one hour a car does during a 20-mile drive.<sup>62</sup> Green landscaping can minimize chemical, fossil fuel, and water inputs.

Conserving water is particularly important. Climate change and an ever-expanding human population are squeezing the supply of potable water.<sup>63</sup> More than a billion people worldwide have no access to clean drinking water, a point that is likely to lead to political tension and instability as the demand for water grows. The U.S. is a leading waster of water, nearly doubling Europe's water consumption (7:4) and completely dwarfing sub-Saharan Africa's (70:4).<sup>64</sup> Inefficient plumbing and wasteful landscape irrigation are major culprits in America's water waste. That means that green plumbers and landscapers have a prime opportunity to save consumers money while conserving one of our most important natural resources.

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Green Landscaping:** Help property owners protect the environment, conserve water, and have beautiful gardens.<sup>65</sup>  
*Example: Middlebrook Gardens in San Jose, California*<sup>66</sup>
- **Native-Plant Nursery:** Grow and sell drought-resistant native plants in your community.
- **Green Garden & Lawn Retail:** Offer environmentally friendly lawn and garden care products.<sup>67</sup>
- **Green Plumbing:**<sup>68</sup> Install tankless water heaters, low-flow toilets, and passive solar water heating systems in client buildings.  
*Example: Green Plumbers, LLC in Los Angeles, California*<sup>69</sup>
- **Green Plumbing Retail:** Become a retailer of and advocate for low-flow, water-

61. Retrieved from: <http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/pubs/outdoor.htm> on November 23, 2009.

62. Retrieved from: [http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/conf12\\_04/conf\\_knwldge.html](http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/conf12_04/conf_knwldge.html) on November 23, 2009.

63. For additional information: <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=384>

64. Retrieved from: <http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/index.php?id=25> on November 23, 2009.

65. For additional information and resources: <http://www.epa.gov/reg3esd1/garden/>; [http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/conf12\\_04/conf\\_knwldge.html](http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/conf12_04/conf_knwldge.html)

66. <http://www.middlebrook-gardens.com>

67. Natural Lawn of America offers natural lawn care products: <http://www.nl-amer.com/CoFranchisingOpportunities.aspx>

68. Green Plumbers USA offers training and certification programs: <http://www.greenplumbersusa.com/>

69. <http://greenplumbersllc.com/>

efficient toilets,<sup>70</sup> tankless water heaters, and passive solar water heaters in your community.

### 9. Green Information Technology (IT)

Computers and other IT products (e.g., data switches, routers and servers) are essential to many businesses operating in the world today. Many medium and large businesses dedicate significant space to this equipment, creating data centers in centralized, secure, temperature-controlled conditions. Most companies are looking to save money by reducing the costs associated with their data center operations, which have significant power requirements, without sacrificing quality or security.

This creates a number of green business opportunities for IT specialists, many of whom have been recently laid off due to the recession. It is also an excellent opportunity for those looking to start a new career in the IT field. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employment for administrators of computer networks, systems, and databases is expected to increase as much as 53% leading up to 2018.<sup>71</sup> IT careers also provide good wages; the median annual salary of network systems and data communication analysts was \$71,100 in May 2008.<sup>72</sup> And these opportunities are available to people from diverse educational backgrounds. Some IT career paths require only an associate's degree, perhaps with minimal vocational training or technical certification.<sup>73</sup>

#### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Efficiency Consulting:** Offer businesses analysis of their data centers' energy consumption and propose cost-saving changes.  
*Example: MegaWatt Consulting in Reno, Nevada*<sup>74</sup>
- **Green Data Center Design and Construction**
- **IT Training:** Enhance overall efficiency by teaching best practices to IT teams at large corporations.
- **E-Cycling:** Recycle electronic waste.  
*Example: Earth E-Cycle in Tulsa, Oklahoma*<sup>75</sup>

### 10. Green, Grassroots Community Lending and Microfinancing

Many great business ideas never take shape due simply to a lack of access to capital. In particular, entrepreneurs in low-income and distressed communities find it nearly impossible to borrow money from traditional banks. They often lack credit history or sufficient collateral, and may be asking for a loan too small to be considered. This presents opportunities for socially responsible entrepreneurs to make seed funds available at low rates.

70. Low-flow toilet overview: <http://www.terrylove.com/crtoilet.htm>

71. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos305.htm#outlook> on December 22, 2009.

72. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos305.htm#outlook> on December 22, 2009.

73. For a list of IT training companies please go to: <http://www.trainingindustry.com/it-training/top-companies-listings/2009/2009-top-20-companies.aspx>

74. <http://www.megawattconsulting.com>

75. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4182/is\\_20080212/ai\\_n21306655/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4182/is_20080212/ai_n21306655/)

Supporting green entrepreneurs in distressed communities can stimulate economic development, scale green jobs, and reverse the environmental degradation of urban centers.

If you are a trusted, well-connected member of your local community with a financial background, consider launching a non-profit green microfinancing institution (MFI) or a green microlending program. There are a few different models of microfinance and microlending, so we recommend you contact organizations that can help you get started.<sup>76</sup>

### POTENTIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- **Green Microfinancing:** Start a green microfinancing institution to fund new entrepreneurs who aim to enhance environmental quality and social equity.  
*Example: Grameen America in New York City, which offers loans to low income entrepreneurs.*<sup>77</sup>
- **Community Lending Circle:** Organize a community lending circle with fellow women, fellow community members, or fellow immigrants.<sup>78</sup>  
*Example: Cesta Populares in San Francisco, California*<sup>79</sup>
- **Online Finance Community:** Start an online community to connect green U.S. microfinance institutions and green lending circles so that more low-income entrepreneurs can benefit from this model of community green financing.  
*Example: Seattle Microfinance Organization in Seattle, Washington*<sup>80</sup>

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76. Resources for advice and consulting: <http://www.missionassetfund.org>; <http://www.greenmicrofinance.com>; <http://www.fwa.org/community/microfinance.htm#3>

77. <http://www.grameenamerica.com/>

78. Paro Centre guide to women's peer lending circles: [http://www.paro.ca/resources/PARO\\_CirclesAndLoans.pdf](http://www.paro.ca/resources/PARO_CirclesAndLoans.pdf)

79. <http://missionassetfund.org/cesta>

80. <http://www.seattlemicrofinance.org/about>; Another example: <http://www.mficonnect.com/>

# GREEN FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITIES

If you are not yet ready to start your own green business and take on the risks associated with ownership, a number of franchise models offer part-time or full-time opportunities in the green business sector.<sup>81</sup> This is a great way to learn about sustainable practices and products while earning money to pay the bills. Some programs require an upfront “buy-in” for training materials and inventory, so we recommend you inquire about all upfront costs before agreeing to start your own franchise. Before you go this route, it may also be helpful to meet with current franchise owners to discuss the opportunity.

## POTENTIAL GREEN FRANCHISE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

### **Green Irene**

<http://www.greenirene.com/>

Independent eco-consultants and green product distributors who work from their own homes or offices.

### **Natural Lawn of America**

<http://www.nl-amer.com/CoFranchisingOpportunities.aspx>

Natural and organic-based lawn products provide an alternative to chemicals.

### **HSI Pure Water Technology® dealers**

<http://www.greenbusinessopportunity.com>

Franchise distributors of water filtration systems for offices, which help offices reduce their waste and carbon footprint by eliminating bottled water in the office.

### **Zola**

<http://www.zolagoods.com/>

Online retailer of environmentally friendly goods for the home. Zola Coordinators host parties in their communities to educate people about their consumer choices and sell products (similar to the Tupperware Parties model).

### **Only Green 4 Me Dealer**

<http://corporate.onlygreen4me.com/become-dealer.php>

Franchise distributor of environmentally friendly products and office supplies.

### **OXXO Care Cleaners**

<http://www.oxxousa.com/franchisepage.html>

Dry cleaning franchises that use Green Earth cleaning products in lieu of harmful petrochemicals.

<sup>81</sup> Additional information and resources: <http://www.greenfranchisedirectory.com/>



# CONCLUSION

Businesses in the emerging green economy are as diverse as the people who start them. This guide focuses on only a handful of the countless opportunities in the marketplace. Still, we hope that you now understand that there is a place for everyone in the new green economy. In the U.S., decades of irresponsible and unsustainable business practices have created an unstable economy, severe social inequities, and environmental degradation that threatens us all. New entrepreneurs are not wasting any time crafting a future that looks a lot brighter—one where small businesses provide products, services, training programs, and living wage jobs that preserve the environment and lift people out of poverty. You can be a part of this new wave of entrepreneurship. Read the next section to learn about other people who have already made this leap and found success. You could be next!





# SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

This section highlights successful organizations across the U.S. that are solving critical environmental problems, addressing social inequities, and creating green-collar jobs in their communities.<sup>82</sup> Hopefully their stories will inspire you to begin working on your own green business plan!

*\* Companies in green participate in Green For All's Capital Access Program Business Coaching Initiative*

## HEALTHY, LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

### **Mo' Better Food**

*Oakland, California*

<http://mobbetterfood.com>

Organization with a number of different programs meant to promote self-sufficiency and economic independence, all while supplying healthy food to the African-American community.

### **\*Brick City Farming Solutions**

*Newark, New Jersey*

<http://brickcityurbanfarms.org/>

This urban farm grows food in vacant lots, then sells the food through a CSA and donates it to projects that feed the poor.

### **City Slicker Farms**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.cityslickerfarms.org/>

Urban farm committed to combating environmental racism by growing healthy food for low-income residents and offering job-training programs.

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<sup>82</sup> For more success stories and information about the impact of small businesses in solving economic and environmental problems, see Small Wonders by The Center for Small Business and the Environment: [http://www.smallwondersreport.org/docs/SWR\\_Final.pdf](http://www.smallwondersreport.org/docs/SWR_Final.pdf)

**All Edibles**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.alledibles.com/>

Edible gardens and landscaping company that advocates for policy changes to support community agriculture.

**People's Grocery**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.peoplesgrocery.org/>

Provides healthy food to low-income residents. Has multiple urban farms, a CSA program, and a greenhouse, as well as plans to open a community grocery store.

**Revolution Foods**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.revfoods.com/>

Supplies healthy natural lunches to school districts, implements energy-efficiency practices, and seeks to reduce rates of childhood obesity through education programs.

**Java Shack**

*Arlington, Virginia*

<http://javashack.com/>

A green coffee house that supports community organizations.

**Sweetwater Organic Coffee**

*Gainesville, Florida*

<http://www.sweetwaterorganiccoffee.com>

Organic, fair-trade coffee roasters, dedicated to sustainable business and trade practices.

**Numi Tea**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.worldpantry.com/cgi-bin/ncommerce3/ExecMacro/numitea/home.d2w/report>

A tea company committed to sustainability, fair-trade, fair-labor practices and organic tea products.

**Back to Earth Organic Catering**

*Emeryville, California*

<http://www.organiccatering.com/>

Uses organic, sustainable and local foods. Its vehicles run on 100% biodiesel. Minimizes waste in all aspects of operation.

**Let's Be Frank Hotdogs**

*San Francisco and Los Angeles, California*

<http://www.letsbefrankdogs.com>

Supports local, family-owned farms that are committed to sustainability.

**Galactic Pizza**

*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

<http://www.galacticpizza.com/vision/>

Implements sustainability initiatives, such as waste reduction, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and organic ingredients. Donates 5% of profits to charity.

**Burgerville**

*Washington and Oregon*

<http://www.burgerville.com>

Restaurant chain committed to sustainability and the use of renewable energy. Offers living-wage jobs with affordable healthcare and community leadership programs for employees.

**Oklahoma Food Cooperative**

*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

<http://oklahomafood.coop>

Member-owned organization providing food from farms and producers within the state. Re-creating a local food system where members know the source of everything they purchase, which increases food safety.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY ALTERNATIVES, GREEN COLLAR JOB TRAINING,  
AND GREEN-BUSINESS INCUBATORS****Veterans Green Jobs**

*Denver, Colorado*

<http://veteransgreenjobs.org>

Green-collar job training for veterans in energy efficiency, weatherization, alternative fuels production, vehicle conversions, and green construction.

**\*Solar Richmond**

*Richmond, California*

<http://solarrichmond.org/>

Solar installation trainer that also provides job-placement services.

**Rising Sun Energy**

*Berkeley, California*

<http://www.risingsunenergy.org>

Provides green-job training to youth and adults who face barriers to employment.

**Green Spaces**

*New York, New York*

<http://www.greenspacesny.com/>

This incubator offers shared workspaces and general support for green startups.

**Grid Alternatives**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.gridalternatives.org>

Provides energy-efficiency upgrades, job training, and solar installations in low-income communities.

**Boots on the Roof**

*Fremont, California*

<http://www.bootsontheroof.com>

Training future green-collar workers and entrepreneurs in the solar, wind and energy-efficiency fields.

**Baltimore Green Works (BGW)**

*Baltimore, Maryland*

<http://baltimoregreenworks.com>

Offers education programs about sustainable ways of living to Maryland's diverse communities.

**\*Imani Energy**

*Los Angeles, California*

<http://imanienergy.com/home.html>

Solar installer and manufacturer. Committed to creating high-demand training and jobs, products and services by building and servicing the rapidly growing green economy.

**\*Growth Through Energy & Community Health (GTECH)**

*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

<http://gtechstrategies.org/>

Biofuel company that utilizes vacant blocks of land to produce biofuel crops.

## GREEN TRANSPORTATION

### **Pedal Revolution**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://www.pedalrevolution.org>

A non-profit bike store that refurbishes used bikes and provides at-risk youth with employment and job training.

### **\*Bikes 4 Life**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.bikes4life.com>

Social enterprise that sells used and recycled bikes at affordable prices. Also offers programming focused on leadership development and community organizing.

### **SmartBike**

*Washington D.C.*

<http://www.smartbike.com>

Bike rental company.

### **NuRide**

*Essex, Connecticut*

<http://www.NuRide.com>

Online community promoting greener transportation by offering points and coupons for choosing green transportation.

### **EnviroCAB**

*Arlington, Virginia*

<http://www.envirotaxicab.com/index.html>

An environmentally sustainable taxicab company.

### **Discount Cab**

*Glendale, Arizona*

<http://www.discountcab.com/>

Uses hybrid cabs and completed \$1 million remodeling of its corporate headquarters to reduce its carbon footprint.

**GREEN PRODUCT INNOVATION AND CONSUMER GOODS****BioBag USA**

*Palm Harbor, Florida*

<http://www.biobagusa.com>

100% biodegradable and compostable bags.

**\*BlackEnergy**

*Atlanta, Georgia*

<http://www.blackenergy.com>

Online retailer of energy-efficiency products.

**\*WilloToons**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://willotoons.com>

Organic baby apparel.

**\*GotGreenKits**

*Atlanta, Georgia*

<http://www.gotgreenkits.com/>

Retailer of green cleaning products.

**\*Tymel Style**

*Villanova, Pennsylvania*

<http://www.tymelstyle.com>

Produces reusable, sustainably manufactured designer bags.

**\*Sweet Beginnings**

*Chicago, Illinois*

<http://www.beelinestore.com/index.html>

Personal care products made from bees' honey, harvested by the recently incarcerated.

**\*Tyga-Box Systems**

*New York, New York*

<http://www.tygabox.com/>

Reusable storage and moving boxes.

Additional examples:

- <http://www.ecofabulous.com>
- <http://gogreenbabyshop.com>
- <http://www.greentoys.com>

- <http://www.organicgurus.net/servlet/StoreFront>
- <http://www.katequinnorganics.com>
- <http://sagecreekorganics.com>
- <http://www.earthcreations.net>

## GREEN HOME AND OFFICE CLEANING SERVICES

### \*EnviroClean USA

*Atlanta, Georgia*

<http://www.envirocleanusa.org/>

Green office cleaning services.

### Natural Home Cleaning Professionals

*San Francisco, California*

<http://www.naturalhomecleaning.com>

A worker-owned green cleaning cooperative.

### \*WAGES

*Oakland, California*

<http://wagescooperatives.org/>

Women's co-op cleaning services and incubator for other cooperatives.

### Green City Office Cleaning

*San Francisco, California*

<http://www.greencityofficecleaning.net/>

### The Green Janitor

*New York, New York*

<http://www.thegreenjanitor.com/>

## THE REUSE REVOLUTION!

### Heritage Salvage

*Petaluma, California*

<http://www.heritagesalvage.com>

Building material reclamation company providing site clearing, deconstruction services, and consultation. Employs out-of-work tradespeople and offers training services to build capacity for jobless and at-risk individuals.

**Ekologic**

*Troy, New York*

<http://www.ekologic.com/>

Designer clothing made from 99% recycled materials.

**The Mouse Works**

*Earlysville, Virginia*

<http://www.themouseworks.com/>

Hand-made clothing and hats made of recycled materials.

**Urban Ore**

*Berkeley, California*

<http://urbanore.ypguides.net/>

Recycled building materials.

**The ReUse People**

*Oakland, California*

<http://www.thereusepeople.org>

Recycled building materials and demolition/salvage training and certification.

**ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOMES AND GREEN HOME RETROFITS****Recurve (formerly Sustainable Spaces)**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://www.sustainablespaces.com>

Sustainable home audits and green retrofits.

**\*EpOxyGreen**

*Venice, California*

<http://www.epOxyGreen.com>

Sustainable building materials and design center.

**\*HTS Enterprises**

*Atlanta, Georgia*

<http://www.htsenterprise.com>

Green engineering services.

**\*Stinnette & Brown**

*Chicago, Illinois*

<http://www.stinnetteandbrown.com/>

Green building development and construction.



**\*Enpulse Energy Conservation**

*Greensboro, North Carolina*

<http://www.enpulse.com/>

Energy-efficiency engineering and business consulting.

**GREEN LANDSCAPING AND GREEN PLUMBING****Middlebrook Gardens**

*San Jose, California*

<http://www.middlebrook-gardens.com>

A sustainable landscape design and build company.

**The Garden Project**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://gardenproject.org>

Employment, job training, and education for at-risk youth and former offenders.

Preserving the environment through low-impact gardening and native plant stewardship.

**Clean Air Lawn Care**

*Fort Collins, Colorado*

<http://cleanairlawncare.com>

Environmentally friendly lawn care services.

**Green Plumbers, LLC**

*Los Angeles California*

<http://greenplumbersllc.com/>

Green plumber and contractor offering an array of services, including gray water system installation, HVAC, and solar thermal installation.

**GREEN IT****MegaWatt Consulting**

*Reno, Nevada*

<http://www.megawattconsulting.com>

Offers consulting services on energy-efficient data centers and renewable energy.

**EMC Consulting**

*Hopkinton, Massachusetts*

<http://www.emc.com/services/consulting/infrastructure/expertise/infrastructure-consolidation.htm>

Energy-efficient data center consulting services, with an internal commitment to social responsibility and sustainability.

**GREEN, GRASS-ROOTS COMMUNITY LENDING AND MICROFINANCING**

*(Most of these organizations either focus on green microfinance overseas, or microfinance and lending in the U.S. with a specific green-focus.)*

**Green MicroFinance Center**

*Phoenixville, Pennsylvania*

<http://www.greenmicrofinance.org/>

Committed to addressing climate change and environmental justice through education and microfinancing for the poor in developing countries.

**Seedco**

*New York, New York*

<http://www.seedco.org/>

An organization focusing on community development within the U.S. by providing investments in low-income communities.

**Cesta Populares**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://missionassetfund.org/cestas>

A formalized peer-lending program that helps low-income immigrants participate in peer-lending and improve their credit scores.

**Kiva**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://www.kiva.org/>

Microlending organization that focuses mainly on entrepreneurs in developing countries, but recently announced microlending within the U.S. as well.

**Prosper**

*San Francisco, California*

<http://www.prosper.com/>

An online investment and lending company that formalizes peer-to-peer lending.