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# Executive Summary

The American Jobs Project was borne of two tough problems: loss of middle-class jobs in America and congressional paralysis. It seeks to address these problems by taking advantage of one of the biggest market opportunities of our era—the advanced energy sector—and to do so at the state, not the federal level. Policymakers who leverage the unique strategic advantages of their state to grow localized sectors of interconnected companies and institutions are poised to create quality jobs.

Georgia can lead in advanced energy in the Southeast United States and nationally, and has the potential to be globally competitive. The state is already home to 801 advanced energy firms that contribute an estimated \$3.3 billion in gross revenues to the state while providing nearly 24,000 full-time jobs.<sup>11</sup> Extensive research and more than forty interviews with local experts and stakeholders in Georgia identified two economic sectors with particular promise for jobs: smart buildings and solar.

Georgia has a well-established innovation ecosystem, strong education, research and development, and is home to many Fortune 500 companies. Georgia already has innovative economic clusters in smart buildings and solar. Georgia’s policymakers can build on existing strengths with policies to help the state’s businesses grow, innovate, and outcompete regional, national, and global competitors. With the right policies, Georgia can support over 24,000 jobs annually from 2016 to 2030 in the smart building and solar clusters.

This project serves as a research-based roadmap for state and local leaders in Georgia. It provides a set of policy options that build on existing programs and strengths in the state and focus on leveraging Georgia’s resources to create skilled, good-paying jobs.



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## Summary of Recommendations

The analysis presented in this report culminates in four thematic sets of recommendations for Georgia's policymakers. Each set of recommendations identifies opportunities for barrier removal and future growth in the advanced energy sector. Taken together, these recommendations chart a course for Georgian leaders to create and enhance jobs in the advanced energy sector.

### Solar

**Streamline Solar Permitting:** Reduce the soft costs of installing solar by simplifying permitting processes, lowering permit fees, and establishing consistent interconnection requirements throughout Georgia.

**Encourage Foreign Direct Investment:** Recruit foreign solar companies and manufacturers to Georgia in order to boost investment and fill gaps in the supply chain.

**Create a Property Tax Exemption for Solar:** Incentivize residential investment in solar by granting property tax exemptions for solar panel installations and other advanced energy technologies.

**Offer a Green Source Rider Program:** Establish a utilities-led program that allows energy-intensive customers, such as big-box retailers, college campuses, and data centers, to voluntarily purchase renewable energy.

**Establish a Solar Factory Retooling Financing Program:** Increase solar manufacturing in Georgia by providing capital for retooling factories, purchasing equipment, and building facilities.

### Smart Building and Energy Efficiency

**Make Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing Simple:** Encourage energy efficiency building upgrades by allowing property owners to finance investments with a loan that is repaid through their property tax bill.

**Expand On-bill Financing for Georgia Power:** Provide utility customers with an on-bill financing option in order to mitigate the high upfront costs of home energy improvements.

**Use Revenue Decoupling to Encourage Energy Efficiency:** Establish a mechanism that decouples a utility's fixed rates and variable rates (based on sales) in order to stabilize utility earnings and remove disincentives for supporting energy efficiency programs.

**Adopt Municipal Benchmarking Ordinances:** Establish city-level benchmarking ordinances throughout the state in order to

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monitor commercial building energy performance, encourage smart building investments, and achieve environmental benefits.

**Update Georgia Building Codes:** Adopt the most recent residential and commercial building codes in order to expand the market for energy efficient structures.

**Pilot a Dynamic Rate Structure:** Help utilities reduce peak demand and avoid costly investments in generating facilities by piloting a dynamic rates program. With dynamic rates, customers would pay the real-time cost of generation rather than the average cost. They would respond to the higher price of power at peak times by reducing energy use.

## Innovation Ecosystem and Access to Capital

**Establish a Capital Gains Tax Exemption for Investment in Startups:** Increase the flow of venture capital by establishing a capital gains tax exemption for investments in targeted Georgia startups.

**Facilitate Partnerships within the Energy Innovation Ecosystem:** Attract public and private research money and venture capital funding to Georgia by aligning advanced energy sector efforts and establishing collaborative partnerships among various stakeholders.

## Workforce Development

**Develop Certificate and Degree Programs around High-Performance Buildings:** Collaborate with Georgia's universities and technical colleges to create certificate and degree programs that prepare students for jobs in the smart building and energy efficiency sector.

**Develop Degree Programs in Energy Engineering and Sustainability Science:** Prepare students for jobs in the solar and smart building industries by establishing more formal degree programs related to advanced energy engineering and sustainability science.

**Create More Apprenticeship Opportunities in Advanced Energy Technologies:** Meet employer demand for trained workers and prepare Georgians for jobs in advanced energy sectors by incentivizing companies to expand apprenticeship opportunities.

