

# America's Tomorrow: Equity Is the Superior Growth Model



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## Features

### A Budget to Advance Equity



Buffalo Promise Neighborhood  
Groundbreaking on a new early childhood education center at the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in Buffalo, NY in October 2012. President Obama has increased his request for Promise Neighborhoods to \$300 million in FY 2014.

In the midst of a sluggish recovery and unacceptably high unemployment rates in communities of color, now is the time for bold action to build an equitable economy in which all can participate and prosper.

How does President Obama's budget proposal for FY 2014 measure up to the challenge at hand? Here are the highlights:

- **Create Communities of Opportunity.** Over \$5 billion more to expand opportunities for low-income families through affordable housing, resilient neighborhoods, and access to healthy foods.
- **Grow Good Jobs.** Over \$50 billion in new investments to create and attract more jobs, including vital support for manufacturing and increased funding for our bridges,

## In Brief

### A Pathway to Citizenship Helps the Economy

A new [infographic](#) from the Center for American Progress shows how creating a pathway to citizenship for 11 million undocumented immigrants would generate over \$800 billion in new economic activity, and create over 120,000 new jobs annually.

### Growing Jobs among the Weeds

Whole new industries are sprouting up to prune, weed, and maintain thousands of new green rain water projects – from rain gardens to bioswales to new trees.

A new [report](#) by Green for All and American Rivers provides important recommendations on how to ensure the jobs created will be good paying and accessible to workers from low-income communities and communities of color.

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### Lessons from Africa

The U.S. could learn a few things

transit systems, and airports.

- **Invest in Our Future.** Over \$10 billion in additional funding to prepare young people to be the leaders of tomorrow, and equip Americans with skills needed to compete for 21st century jobs, including universal preschool education and new funding for community college-to-career programs.
- **Build Healthier Communities.** Over \$4 billion in increased spending for health centers and other programs for families and communities.

The potential gains that can come through these investments will not be fully achieved if families are devastated by cuts to essential programs like Medicare and Social Security. Critical investments and innovative strategies proposed in the budget can catalyze vastly improved outcomes for hardest hit people and communities only when paired with the basic security provided by safety net programs.

Read the full PolicyLink budget analysis [here](#).

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## Power Players: Training the New Utilities Workforce



McCall substation tour

One of the largest utility companies in the nation is investing in a new, diverse generation of workers to advance a new energy economy – and forging an inclusive model for connecting good jobs to the people who need them most.

The PowerPathway initiative, launched by California's Pacific

from Africa on how to grow our economy and reduce inequality, [according to](#) Imara Jones at *Colorlines*.

Sub-Saharan Africa's economy is booming at the same time as poverty rates have fallen and the middle class is growing. The secret? Create neighborhood businesses, harness technology to get people out of poverty, and unleash local creativity.

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### Build the Road to Equity

How can we bring down high unemployment rates among African Americans and Latinos? Invest in our roads, rails, and bridges.

A [new report](#) from Economic Policy Institute shows how a large share of jobs from past infrastructure investments have gone to black and Latino workers, bringing down unemployment in these communities.

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Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), has trained hundreds of workers, mainly from low-income communities, for skilled entry-level jobs with career opportunities. Sixty percent of the graduates are people of color or women. Most have landed utility or energy jobs that start at nearly \$25 an hour. Many have moved up to higher positions.

"It gave me the opportunity to pursue a career," said Yesenia Vega, a 25-year-old former Marine corporal and recent PowerPathway graduate.

The initiative is helping PG&E to stay ahead of the demographic wave that is reshaping the workforce and the nation. More than 40 percent of the company's nearly 20,000 employees will retire in the next five years. Nationwide, some utility companies are anticipating the retirement of as much as [half](#) their line workers, a major middle-skill, entry-level occupation in the industry.

PG&E is committed to drawing replacements from the increasingly diverse communities it serves, in large part because local hiring boosts employee retention and the bottom line.

"Everyone wins when we hire local talent," said James Morante, Manager of Workforce Development at PG&E. "That workforce not only reflects the diverse communities we serve, but elevates the sense of pride to work in and around their own neighborhoods."

### **The right training**

PG&E partners with dozens of community colleges, four-year colleges, unions, and workforce programs around the state. The utility focuses on strengthening their capacity to recruit, counsel, and prepare a work-ready pool of job applicants.

The colleges provide training courses, typically eight to 10 weeks long. They are tailored to meet the utility's current employment needs in a given community. "When we create a program, it has to be the right program in the right place at the right time," Morante said. "At the end of the day, workforce development is about job placements. We need to make sure the programs are aligned with those jobs."

Launched in 2008 in the Bay Area, PowerPathway has scaled up to serve more California communities – from Bakersfield in the south to Butte County in the north – and to cover more job

classifications. These range from pole climber and gas line repairer to welder and electrical technician, and more. Courses are free but slots are competitive – schools typically receive 1,500 applications for a class of 25 or 30, according to Morante. A high school diploma or G.E.D. is required.

PowerPathway recently began a program in Oakland exclusively for women, to bring gender balance to a workforce that is 92 percent male. The initiative has run targeted programs for military veterans since 2009. About 180 of the 340 job candidates trained through 2012 are veterans.

Yesenia Vega enlisted in the Marines straight out of high school. After serving four years in Japan and California, she attended an automotive trade school. Then she struggled to find a job that paid a living wage and offered prospects for the future. She came across a newspaper ad for PowerPathway and enrolled in a course for veterans at American River College in Sacramento.

"I was looking for a career, not just a job," she said.

She recently interviewed for a PG&E contract job in data collection and management, and she expects to receive an offer any day.

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*America's Tomorrow* highlights campaigns, leaders, policies, reports, and local models that are advancing equity as an economic imperative. It is produced by Chris Schildt, Sarah Treuhافت, Fran Smith, and Ana Louie. To learn more, visit the *America's Tomorrow* [webpage](#).

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