



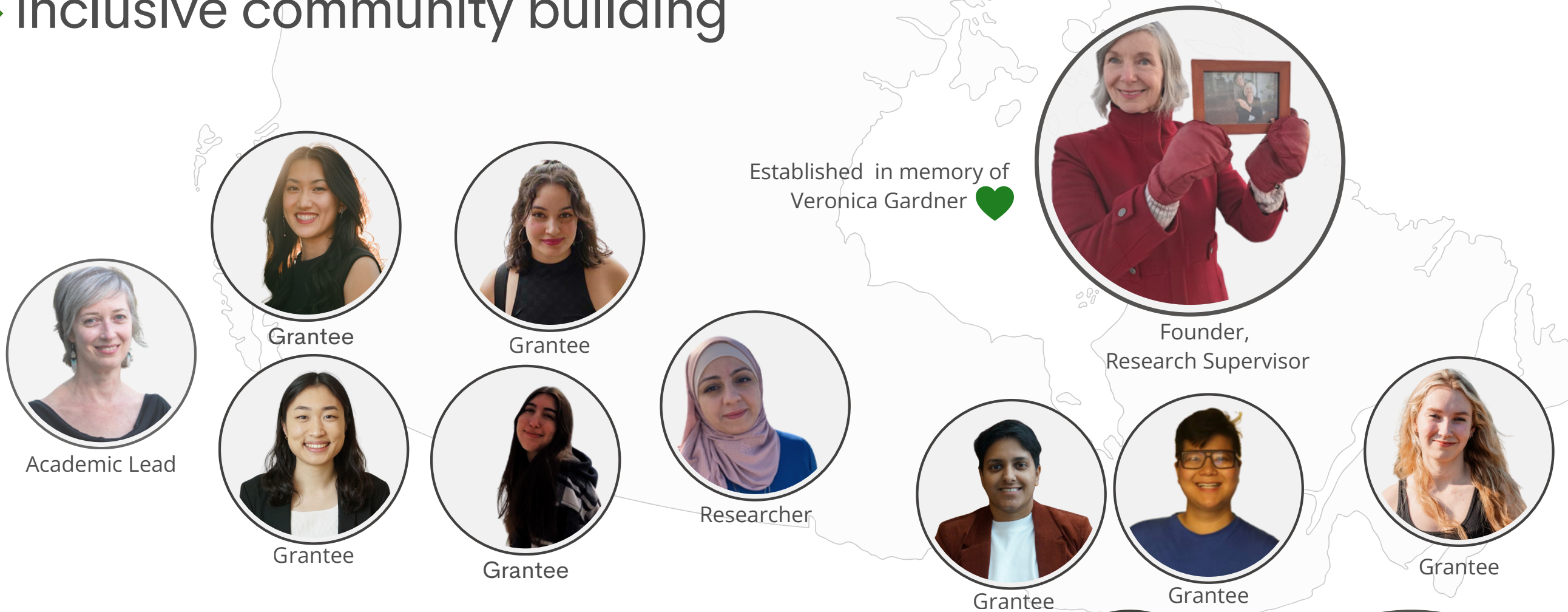
Trellis



Supporting the **next generation** of **clean energy** professionals

Filling gaps in Canada's energy workforce

- providing financial support
- mentorship & professional development opportunities
- research & advocacy
- inclusive community building



Making impact



Founding Advisory Committee: Energy Sector trailblazers

Meeting electricity sector demand¹

- 4.3% annual projected employment growth
- 13.1% job vacancy rate
- The benefits of workforce diversity

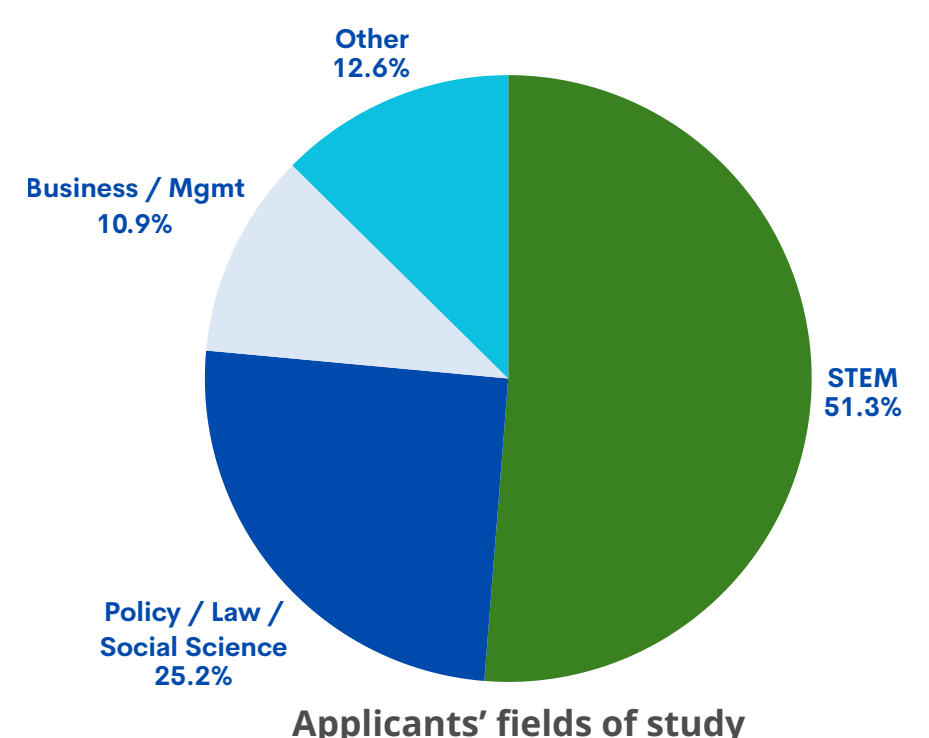


Listening • Learning • Leading

Sharing unique user-generated insights to increase the resilience of the Canada's energy transition and sector.

From 119 diverse grant applications, and with ReSET CoLab at University of Victoria BC, we learned about:

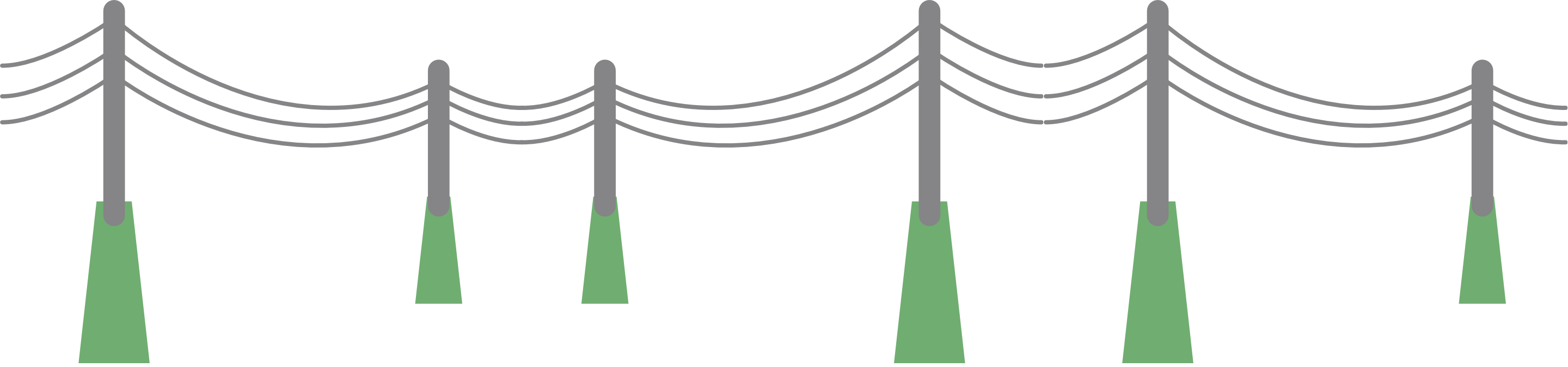
- Structural Barriers to Workforce Entry
- Motivations, Values, and Representation in Clean Energy Careers
- Career Aspirations and Employment Pathways
- Leveraging Bursary and Support Mechanisms



Building a community of value-aligned partners & supporters



¹Electricity Human Resources Canada. March 2025. Winds of Change Labour Market Dynamics in Renewable Energy Report, <https://ehrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/EHRC-Winds-of-Change-2025.pdf>



Improving equity in Canada's low-carbon energy workforce

→ Learning from the lived experiences of diverse applicants to a grassroots bursary

Contributions & Implications

This research project offers actionable insights for policymakers, educators, employers, and industry associations seeking to design inclusive workforce strategies.

The findings demonstrate that equity-deserving groups are not disengaged from Canada's low-carbon energy transition; they are actively seeking to lead it. However, without intentional reforms in funding models, education pathways, hiring practices, and workplace cultures, the sector risks reproducing historical inequities—undermining both social legitimacy and labour-force resilience.

Executive Summary

Clean energy jobs are growing fast — but many people who want in are being left out.

If Canada wants a successful energy transition, inclusive workforce systems must be part of the plan.

Canada's transition to a low-carbon energy system is creating one of the fastest-growing labour markets in the country. Yet **despite strong job growth projections, the low-carbon energy workforce remains persistently inequitable**. Women and other equity-deserving groups – including Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, newcomers, youth, and LGBTQ+ individuals—continue to be underrepresented, particularly in technical, trades, leadership, and decision-making roles.

The misalignment between workforce demand and inclusive participation poses both a justice concern and a strategic risk to Canada's energy transition.

This study examined how equity gaps in Canada's low-carbon energy workforce are experienced and navigated by those seeking entry, using the Trellis Bursary Fund as a grassroots case study.

Drawing on qualitative analysis of 119 narrative-based bursary applications submitted in 2024 and 2025, the research centers lived experience as a source of workforce insight—addressing a critical gap in existing literature that is dominated by labour-market modelling and surveys.

This small-scale, community-led intervention that operates outside mainstream funding and hiring systems tests alternative norms of inclusion, care, and recognition.

Keywords

Energy sector

Workforce

Canada

Equity & Inclusion

Energy transition

Key Takeaways



Structural barriers - not lack of interest or talent - constrain participation.

Applicants consistently identified financial precarity (tuition, living expenses, unpaid labour), credential recognition barriers, exclusionary workplace cultures, and inflexible training and employment pathways as primary obstacles. These barriers are compounded for individuals with intersecting identities, particularly BIPOC, newcomer, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and under-25 applicants.



Applicants are highly motivated by justice-oriented values.

Rather than viewing low-carbon energy careers as purely economic opportunities, applicants framed their aspirations around climate responsibility, equity, community well-being, representation, and intergenerational accountability. Many explicitly linked their career goals to correcting historical exclusions and ensuring that the benefits of the energy transition are distributed fairly.



Career aspirations extend beyond narrow technical roles.

While over half of applicants were pursuing STEM or technical programs, many envisioned hybrid pathways that integrate engineering and science with governance, policy, community engagement, research, entrepreneurship, and mentorship. These aspirations align closely with documented workforce gaps in leadership, governance, and community-facing roles in the low-carbon energy sector.



The Trellis Bursary functions as an infrastructure of care.

Applicants emphasized that even modest, flexible financial support materially affected their ability to remain in education, reduce survival labour, and invest in leadership and professional development. Beyond funding, Trellis provided recognition, validation, and access to networks—elements often absent from conventional scholarships and workforce programs.

Conclusion

A successful low-carbon energy transition requires more than technological deployment. It requires inclusive workforce systems that recognize lived experience, redistribute opportunity, and embed care as a structural principle.

Grassroots, women-led initiatives such as the Trellis Bursary illustrate how small-scale, justice-oriented interventions can generate outsized impact by enabling participation, leadership, and retention among those historically excluded.

By learning from these lived experiences and scaling their underlying principles, Canada can build not only a larger low-carbon energy workforce, but a more just, representative, and resilient one.

Recommendations

- Recognize bursaries and mentorship as workforce infrastructure, not charitable add-ons.
- Embed equity metrics into clean-energy funding, procurement, and workforce programs.
- Value lived experience and transferable skills alongside formal credentials in hiring.
- Support flexible, non-linear education and training pathways, including micro-credentials and career pivots.
- Partner with grassroots, women-led initiatives as innovation labs for inclusive workforce design.
- Expand leadership and governance pipelines, not just technical roles.
- Center care, recognition, and belonging as core components of retention and job quality.

About the Research Paper

Title

Improving equity in Canada's low-carbon energy workforce: learning from the lived experiences of diverse applicants to a grassroots bursary

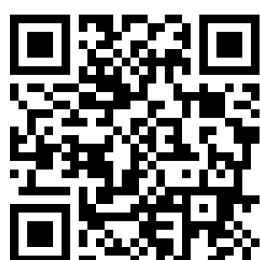
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