KEY ACTION AREA:

Foster energy resilience and independence

The need

Reliable and affordable access to energy is essential for health, safety, and economic well-being; climate change is putting that access at risk. Increasing occurrences and severity of heat waves and wildfires could lead to more frequent and prolonged power outages and power shutoffs across the South-Central Puget Sound,[41] particularly impacting communities with high energy cost burdens or limited access to alternative cooling and cleaner air. As extreme heat intensifies, greater reliance on air conditioning becomes a critical public health protection—but also significantly increases electricity demand, straining an already stressed grid. At the same time, deploying energy-intensive infrastructure, including data centers, further heightens grid instability and reliability challenges. When the power goes out, medically vulnerable residents may lose access to lifesaving equipment, essential community services shut down, and businesses face costly disruptions. Investing in energy resilience—through community-owned renewable systems, decentralized backup power, and modernized infrastructure—helps ensure residents can stay safe during extreme events while strengthening long-term energy independence and economic resilience.[42]

Action plans for high-priority strategies

The following action plans outline steps to implement selected high-priority strategies and identify key partners and existing efforts to build on.

City scape of downtown Tacoma, Washington

This is an excerpt from the C2ES Regional Action Roadmap for Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke, informed from conversations from the South-Central Puget Sound Climate Resilient Communities Accelerator.

Find the full Roadmap here: *https://www.c2es.org/document/puget-sound-action-roadmap*.

HIGH-PRIORITY STRATEGY: Build a network of trusted community energy hubs that provide clean, reliable power and essential services during outages and heat or smoke emergencies.

Communities and businesses rely on trusted local spaces during disruptions. This action plan advances a regional network of *clean energy-enabled community hubs*[43] that serve as reliable anchors during power outages and extreme heat or smoke events. The strategy aligns public, private, and community partners to invest in hubs that strengthen local energy resilience, reduce energy burdens, and provide power, cooling, clean air, information, and support during emergencies while building long-term community capacity and trust.

STEPS:

1. **Determine the most trusted and accessible spaces for hub locations**—such as libraries, faith organizations, local businesses, housing complexes, or cultural centers—by hosting workshops and listening sessions with communities, with particular attention to neighborhoods facing higher risks for power outages, heat, and smoke.
    - Identify and build off existing planning efforts and frameworks for identifying trusted and accessible locations, such as the *Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Project for Puget Sound Resilience Hubs*.[44]
2. **Map regional needs and opportunities** using shared data and public-sector expertise by partnering with emergency managers, utilities, public health agencies, and planners to overlay indicators of vulnerability (e.g., outage frequency, energy insecurity, household medical device dependence, heat exposure) with existing facilities that could serve as energy hubs capable of providing reliable access to energy during emergencies.
3. **Assess site feasibility and resilience design requirements for two or three pilot hub locations** by conducting building-level evaluations to understand power needs, structural considerations, and the potential for incorporating solar + storage and microgrids. Assessments should prioritize clean, independent energy systems that enable hubs to operate and maintain power during grid outages.
    - Explore at least one pilot that reflects a public-private partnership, such as a community-serving business that can support nearby residents while also protecting business continuity and workforce safety.
4. **Launch a public-private energy hub investment and matchmaking program** by creating a regional mechanism to connect trusted community facilities with utility programs, philanthropic funders, and private-sector partners willing to support clean energy, efficiency, and resilience upgrades. Emphasize investments that deliver everyday energy savings and reliability benefits while also enabling emergency response.
5. **Equip local hub operators and grow long-term community capacity** by identifying existing resources for training, technical assistance, and operational support.
6. **Launch a regional awareness campaign highlighting energy hub case studies** that demonstrate everyday benefits (e.g., lower energy costs, community services, workforce protection) and emergency value. Elevate private-sector champions and community hosts to build momentum and replicability.

ESSENTIAL LEADERS AND PARTNERS:

- **Nonprofit:** community-based organizations, faith-based facilities and organizations, health and community service providers
- **Public:** public energy utilities, libraries, health care experts and providers
- **Private:** private energy utilities, health care experts and providers, community-serving businesses, multi-family housing

C2ES CENTER FOR CLIMATE AND ENERGY SOLUTIONS

This is an excerpt from the C2ES Regional Action Roadmap for Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke, informed from conversations from the South-Central Puget Sound Climate Resilient Communities Accelerator.

Find the full Roadmap here: *https://www.c2es.org/document/puget-sound-action-roadmap*.

HIGH-PRIORITY STRATEGY: Expand regional job pathways to build a skilled, sustainable, and clean energy workforce.

A resilient response to rising heat and wildfire smoke depends on a robust energy system—and on the skilled workforce needed to build, maintain, and modernize that system. This action plan expands regional job pathways to grow a skilled and inclusive clean-energy workforce prepared to deliver technologies like solar, storage, heating and cooling system efficiency, strengthening the region's long-term energy security and resilience.

STEPS:

1. **Review recent statewide clean-energy workforce analyse**s (e.g., the *Clean Technology and Energy Sector June 2025 Strategy Update*[45] *and the Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee's November 2025 Legislative Update Report*[46]) to distill findings relevant to the South-Central Puget Sound region. Identify priority occupations, emerging skill gaps, and recommended training pathways to determine whether additional regional assessment is needed. If so, this may include:
    - Hosting listening sessions with clean-energy employers and workforce partners to surface top skill needs and upcoming projects.
    - Conducting a regional skills and labor market assessment with utilities, major employers, and workforce boards to identify in-demand roles.
2. **Partner with community colleges and technical schools** to build job pathways by expanding or cocreating certificate programs for clean-energy careers, renewable systems maintenance, and climate-ready trades, ensuring stackable credentials and direct employer engagement.
3. **Identify and partner with existing local leaders and groups providing resources on careers in clean-energy sectors** to expand access to career pathway information, such as by:
    - creating a simple regional "clean-energy careers" resource sheet that compiles existing training programs, apprenticeships, scholarships, and local contacts into one easy-to-share document or webpage.
    - launching a monthly "clean-energy career spotlights" newsletter with local employers to provide brief, informal virtual conversations highlighting career paths and real job requirements.
4. **Develop a plan for ensuring equitable and inclusive workforce access**, including expanded language access, wraparound support services (e.g., stipends, childcare, transportation), and paid apprenticeships and youth employment opportunities that can sustainably build a strong clean energy workforce, including by:
    - Working with K–12 educators to integrate education initiatives that build a long-term pipeline of students interested and ready to pursue clean energy careers.

ESSENTIAL LEADERS AND PARTNERS:

- **Nonprofit:** community-based organizations, unions and labor organizing groups
- **Public:** education institutions (high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities), libraries, economic and community development departments, public utilities, Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges
- **Private:** private education institutions, local businesses, private utilities

EXAMPLES AND EXISTING EFFORTS:

- *Coalition for Climate Careers*[47]
- *Mapping Green Stormwater Infrastructure Careers to Improve Diversity and Inclusivity by the Seattle Jobs Initiative and The Nature Conservancy*[48]
- King County's *JumpStart Program*[49]
- Emerald Cities Collaborative Northwest's *HVAC Prep Academy*[50]
- Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU)'s *Apprenticeship Programs*[51]
- Interstate Renewable Energy Council's *Clean Energy Career Maps*[52]
- *Microsoft Elevate*,[53] as a possible pathway for private sector partnership on workforce training
- *Opportunity Now Colorado*[54]

C2ES CENTER FOR CLIMATE AND ENERGY SOLUTIONS

This is an excerpt from the C2ES Regional Action Roadmap for Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke, informed from conversations from the South-Central Puget Sound Climate Resilient Communities Accelerator.

Find the full Roadmap here: *https://www.c2es.org/document/puget-sound-action-roadmap*.