

Climate Careers

Climate work has never been more urgent, but access to green careers is inequitable. “A big percentage of why people get a job...it's not that you're passionate about what you're doing, it's that you have bills to pay. It was revolutionary for me, getting paid to pursue meaningful work in the climate space,” observed Diana Ramirez, who started with Rising Sun as a youth participant. Now part of the Climate Careers team, she oversees our youth employment program building household climate resilience while offering young Californians paid, accessible pathways into the green economy.

When youth join Climate Careers, they earn a living wage as Energy Specialists, providing free energy efficiency, electrification, and water conservation services to underserved and hard-to-reach residents of their own neighborhoods. “Whenever I go to Northern San Mateo County, I'll be able to say, ‘Hey, I've been to that house before. I helped them. I remember the time they smiled,’” shared 2024 Energy Specialist Landon Kan Huy. “It just makes you feel good, and it makes you feel like you have a purpose.”

Rising Sun knows that every sector of our economy has a role to play in building a climate-resilient future. **After working as Energy Specialists, youth continue their employment, taking on paid externships in a wide variety of climate-related roles at partner companies and organizations.** This deeper step into the world of work is also a step forward for equity.

“I had applied to 30 or 40 summer internships and was starting to give up on myself professionally,” noted 2019 Climate Careers Energy Specialist Ronald Catahimican. Ronald has gone on to hold multiple positions in the energy sector and is now a BayREN Energy Advisor and pursuing a M.S. in Energy Systems Management. “Rising Sun accepted me and believed in me at a moment when I was ready to step away. In a space where there still aren't many people who look like me, programs like Climate Careers give us the tools and confidence to be pioneers and make this work more accessible to our communities.”



In 2000, Climate Careers was built by and for young Californians. Today, it employs youth from low-income families and serves residents with the highest energy burden across 22 counties in the Bay Area and Central California. Youth leave Climate Careers understanding how to protect the planet while pursuing their dreams—and with the connections, experience, and networks to access life-changing opportunities.

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