

# The 8 Most In-Demand Sustainability Jobs

Sustainability is a hot career field, and within it are many specializations you can pursue, including business, energy, engineering and more. Which ones offer the hottest sustainability jobs?

We've discovered eight of the most in-demand careers jobs of the future. A broad sustainability education is likely the best preparation to take on the most in-demand sustainability careers of tomorrow, but it doesn't hurt to focus on one of these specialties that employers can't get enough of.

## 1. Sustainability Consultants

According to The College Board, management, scientific and technical consulting services will be the industry with the most new jobs created between 2008 and 2018: jobs in these fields are expected to grow by 83 percent. Positions in all of these areas of consulting may include a sustainability focus. Companies and organizations that don't have on-staff sustainability expertise often hire consultants to help them plan and execute sustainability and corporate responsibility efforts, from energy efficiency to employee well-being and engagement.

## 2. Environmental Scientists

The demand for environmental scientists working in labs, offices and field settings is poised to grow. As we continue to tackle complex issues like climate change, toxic chemical cleanup and water conservation, the workforce will need an ever-growing staff of environmental scientists to lead the way.

"Environmental scientists will be needed to study the effects of population growth, which will place higher demands on the environment. Also, businesses and other organizations will need help following environmental laws and preventing environmental problems as they begin new projects. Job openings should arise not only when new jobs are created but also when scientists in this field retire, get promoted, or change careers."

## 3. Environmental Engineers

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that demand for environmental engineers will grow faster than the national average for all occupations between 2012 and 2022, increasing by 15 percent. In addition to the standard wastewater treatment, contaminated site cleanup and state and federal regulation compliance work often associated with environmental engineers, individuals in this profession are also leading water efficiency efforts as state and local governments become increasingly concerned about efficient water use.

## 4. Campus Sustainability Directors or Managers

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) 2012 Higher Education Sustainability Staffing Survey indicates that opportunities for sustainability coordinators, managers or directors at colleges and universities are growing. The results of this survey speak for themselves:

- Nearly half of all 2012 respondents were in positions created or upgraded since 2010, indicating significant growth for sustainability positions in the last two years.
- Sustainability offices are increasingly becoming the norm, with the rate of positions housed in such offices increasing from 23 percent in 2010 to 67 percent in 2012.
- Full-time positions focused on sustainability are increasingly common (74 percent in 2010 to 85 percent in 2012).

## 5. Corporate Social Responsibility/Sustainability Professionals

Starbucks wants one. So does Google. More and more companies are hiring corporate social responsibility and sustainability professionals to help them become more responsible and sustainable corporate citizens. However, the hiring of these professionals waxes and wanes with the world economy. According to GreenBiz Group's 2013 State of the Profession Report, "in the four years between 2005 and 2008, 125 companies added their first full-time sustainability positions. In the four years since, only 91 companies added the first dedicated sustainability resource. Corporate interest appears to be waning as fewer companies are adding sustainability managers as part of the organization." Still, the overall trend is toward growth, even if that growth is slower than it once was.

## 6. Green Building Professionals

Designers—from building architects to civil and mechanical engineers, and urban planners to energy auditors and managers—are needed to design, build and maintain green buildings, including their energy, waste and water systems and the landscapes that surround them. Jobs in green building are expected to continue to climb.

"The economic impact from green building construction is significant and will continue to grow as the demand for green buildings rises," says the U.S. Green Building Council. "Green construction spending currently supports over 2 million jobs and generates over 100 billion dollars in gross domestic product and wages. By the year 2013, this study estimates that green buildings will support nearly 8 million jobs across occupations ranging from construction managers and carpenters to truck drivers and cost estimators

... LEED-related spending has already generated 15,000 jobs since 2000, and by 2013 this study forecasts that an additional 230,000 jobs will be created.”

## 7. Water Engineers and Scientists

Sometimes there’s too much water, such as during hurricanes and other extreme precipitation events; sometimes there’s too little, as is the case during droughts. But, whether there’s too much or too little, water may be the next “inconvenient truth,” creating a demand for scientists and engineers who can deal with each situation. As **National Geographic** points out, “water quality problems abound and their control is an increasingly important green job around the world.”

Many types of professionals are involved in water conservation, according to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**: “Scientists may find new sources of water or find ways to use water more efficiently. Engineers design and develop new products and procedures for saving water. Planning and outreach workers ensure that communities and landscaped areas use water efficiently, and they educate people about water conservation. Construction and water operations workers implement water-saving devices and procedures. Agriculture and grounds maintenance workers help reduce the use of water for farming and landscaping.”

## 8. Agriculture and Food Scientists

**Agricultural and food scientists** are needed to develop eco-friendly farming practices and technologies that can sustainably feed growing world populations, as well as to find plant-based energy sources and help farms and fisheries adapt to **climate change** and rising sea levels. “Most job growth will be in private industry,” reports **The College Board**. “Agricultural scientists will be needed to find farming methods that won’t harm the environment. There may also be opportunities to help find energy sources from plants. The demand for new and safer foods will drive job growth for food scientists.”