HOW TO ADVANCE IN YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL CAREER
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WHAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL JOB MARKET LOOKS LIKE

There are over 200,000 upcoming opportunities in the environmental industry.

It’s true. We did the math and it’s backed by research — check out our environmental labour supply and environmental labour demand reports.

Within the few years, over 172,000 roles within the environmental industry will need to be filled. That’s because close to 30% of environmental industry workers are retiring.

By 2025, there’s expected to be an additional 74,400 new jobs in the environmental industry.

98,300 roles to be filled + 74,400 new roles = 172,700 opportunities awaiting you.

Whether you’re considering being an environmental business owner or progressing into a senior role, it’s a perfect time to plan out your career advancement. We’re going to walk you through a few steps to get you on your way.
Step 1: Understand What’s in Demand

Looking for a senior role?

Below are the top five environmental roles anticipated to need senior employees in order to meet demand. These will need to be filled due to core environmental workers retiring, as well as the projected expansion of the environmental and sustainability sectors. Core environmental workers have specialized training in the environmental industry that can’t be easily replaced.

Mechanical engineers and life science professionals
Facility operation and maintenance managers
Landscape architects and urban and land use planners
Forest technologists and technicians and conservation and fishery officers
Utilities equipment operators and controllers

What Sectors are Most in Need?

Below are the top six economic subsectors that are anticipated to lead the demand for senior environmental professionals. There will be over 74,000 upcoming jobs in these and other areas.

Clean and alternative energy
Clean technology
Nature conservation
Utilities equipment operators and controllers
Sustainable transportation
Water quality

Demain in Action: Clean Tech

Clean technology or cleantech is projected to become a trillion dollar industry. Canada is ranked #1 globally for cleantech research and innovation, but lags behind other countries and is ranked 16th in the world when it comes to commercializing on the ideas being developed here. There are plenty of opportunities for growth within this sector, and that’s reflected in the number of jobs projected and workers needed to fill them within the cleantech space.

Each of these growing sectors have different requirements, offer different rewards and work environments, but they are unified in one aspect of their future: they need people like YOU.

If you were drawn to the environmental industry because you wanted to build your career and create a greener, more socially responsible, and more sustainable future, these emerging fields should validate that choice. These roles show the need for professionals who demonstrate a commitment to environmental best practice.
STEP 2: DETERMINE THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO PROGRESS

TO PROGRESS IN ANY PROFESSION, YOU NEED SOFT SKILLS AND TECHNICAL SKILLS.

Soft skills are what you need to progress in your career. Leadership is an example of a soft skill.

Technical skills are what you need to get a position. Understanding environmental law is an example of a technical skill.

TOP 5 TECHNICAL SKILLS ENVIRONMENTAL EMPLOYERS NEED

WHERE YOU ARE NOW
(Employee with 3-7 years of experience)
- Policy and legislation: 50%
- Industry knowledge: 48%
- Communication and public awareness: 41%
- Education and training: 38%
- Research and development: 35%

WHAT YOU NEED FOR A SENIOR ROLE
(Employee with 8+ years of experience)
- Policy and legislation: 42%
- Communication and public awareness: 30%
- Climate change: 27%
- Research and development: 27%
- Health and safety: 26%

TOP 5 SOFT SKILLS ENVIRONMENTAL EMPLOYERS NEED

WHERE YOU ARE NOW
(Employee with 3-7 years of experience)
- Project management: 71%
- Leadership: 70%
- Communication: 67%
- Negotiation and conflict resolution: 67%
- Problem solving: 61%

WHAT YOU NEED FOR A SENIOR ROLE
(Employee with 8+ years of experience)
- Negotiation and conflict resolution: 62%
- Leadership: 55%
- Communication: 44%
- Project management: 42%
- Team work: 36%

Source: ECO Canada Essential Skills report

Once you’ve identified a career or sectoral stream that you want to grow into, it is important to assess your current skillset, and identify any gaps in your education and experience that you’ll need to fill in order to maximize not only your chances of securing a senior role, but also optimizing your efficacy once you’re through the door.

ECO Canada education to support you

ECO offers a library of online learning opportunities that you can work through at home, on your own time, with little to no impact on your current career. We also offer online certificates that can help you build these senior-level technical skills. These certificates include:

- Post-Graduate Certificate in Science and Policy of Climate Change
- Canadian Environmental Law course
- Project Management Bundle

In addition, we host live virtual instructor-led workshops on a range of topics that equip you with the skills you need to support your career progression. Visit our website to learn more at www.eco.ca
STEP 3: SHOW INITIATIVE

You’ve done your research and understand what skills you need to advance. It’s time to show initiative. This could be to prospective clients or your boss.

Learn and practice your soft skills
Mentioned earlier soft skills, like leadership, are what you need to progress.

Practice being a leader and not just a manager
If you want to advance, being a leader is important. This means you understand the big picture; you can see and act on things from a 40,000-foot level while still relating and understanding the 1,000-foot level.

Show your value
This means going beyond the expectations for your leaders or managers. It also shows you’re able and willing to accept more responsibility.

Build trust and relationships
Again, this goes back to building soft skills. For example, in order to be a leader, building trust is critical. One way you can build trust is to collaborate with other departments — you’ll get the opportunity to learn more about what they do and also, help them with projects.

Consider environmental designations
Environmental designations certify that you’re competent in specific areas of the environmental industry. ECO Canada’s Environmental Professional (EP) designation is one example. It’s recognized across Canada and gives you access to potential speaking opportunities, networking events, professional development, and more.

Do your research
If you’re thinking about environmental designations or further training, go to our guides page. The guides are free resources that offer information about environmental sector designations, post-secondary education such as the Masters in Environmental Practice, and more.

Stay Up To Date on Emerging Trends
You may be highly-educated in your field, but it cannot be stressed enough that, to ascend to the top of your field, that education should never end. Consider the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) movement as an example. According to an Ernst and Young (EY) article, 74% of investors factor non-financial reporting (which often come up for ESG) into their financing approval decision making.

If you aspire to a senior leadership position, or even as an independent consultant, you will need to be very knowledgeable of the importance of this emerging trend.
STEP 4: CONNECT WITH EXPERTS

Connecting with other environmental professionals is a way to learn how you can progress in your career and also, meet potential clients.

Here are a few ways you can make connections:

Do information interviews
That means asking a professional, or business owner that’s in your area of interest how they got to where they are today. Information interviews can help you learn how to shape your own career path as well as what education and training you could need.

Join professional associations
ECO’s EP designation offers a variety of networking events where you can meet like-minded professionals. Use these events to talk about your interests, ask questions, and explore ways to collaborate with other professionals.

There’s lots to think about when it comes to progressing in your environmental career; we’re here to help!

Contact us at info@eco.ca if you have any questions.