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New offshore wind academy to train skilled US workers to meet sector jobs boom

Serene Hamsho, founder of American Offshore Wind Academy.
Photo: Recharge



Sector may need up to 58,000 new staff annually to meet President Joe Biden's goals

By **Tim Ferry**

The US will soon see a boom in offshore wind jobs as federal regulators keep up a blistering pace of project approvals, raising the amount of capacity in or headed for construction to nearly 9GW, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

It forecasts that upwards of 58,000 workers annually will be required for the country to meet President Joe Biden's 30GW by 2030 national target.

Offshore wind workforce development is typically described in terms of construction, electrician, and mariner jobs that will comprise the largest bulk of employment created by the sector.

Less well known is the need for highly skilled, well-rounded management staff essential to project execution.

A consortium of industry leaders Tuesday announced formation of the American Offshore Wind Academy (AOWA) to cross-train professionals and new entrants in an array of disciplines.

"The offshore wind sector is on the cusp of significant growth, but it faces a critical need for a highly skilled workforce," said Serene Hamsho, president of the newly formed American Offshore Wind Academy to cross-train professionals in the range of disciplines necessary for both career and sector growth.

Hamsho shared with *Recharge* that inspiration for the academy arose from her extensive 14-year experience in the industry, encompassing leadership and engineering roles.

"I've observed a significant knowledge gap among professionals from various sectors within the industry. For instance, individuals engaged in turbine manufacturing possess intricate knowledge about each bolt and component, yet they often lack a comprehensive understanding of the broader development process," she said.

This tendency is widespread, Hamsho noted, and could be a limiting factor in career as well as sector development. Specialists involved in offshore wind development "still need to have a proper knowledge for the different aspect," she observed.

"The academy will offer more than 50 courses in a wide range of advanced topics, including offshore wind financing, transmissions and floating technology courses with the aim of each attendee having "enough knowledge to advance their career."

Jim Bennett, former head of federal offshore energy regulator Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)'s renewable energy programme, serves on the academy's advisory board.

"The Academy will help provide critical training opportunities for the workforce as this American industry grows toward its full potential," he said.

In addition to Bennett, prominent industry leaders involved include Amy McGinty, vice president at Vestas; Adrienne Downey, country head in the US and Canada for Swedish floating wind developer Hexicon; Mandar Pandit, chief of strategy and growth officer at GE Grid Solutions; Jay Borkland, director of ports and supply chain at Avangrid Renewables; and Theodore Paradise, energy partner at international law firm K&L Gates.