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BNE sees opportunity in renewable energy

Business First of Buffalo - by [David Bertola](#)

The green economy offers the region job-growth-opportunities as the demand for renewable energy grows, according to a recent **Buffalo Niagara Enterprise** study,

The findings were presented Jan. 12 at a forum titled “Economic Development Tools for a New Economy.” It was attended by approximately 50 BNE partners including investors, utilities and industrial development agencies from Western New York.

The study, titled “Buffalo Niagara – Where Industry Creates Energy,” is a culmination of two years of research.

BNE commissioned the study to seek third-party validation for what officials said was opportunity in the renewable energy industry, as well as to gather details to refine strategic initiatives.

The study was funded by **National Grid** and performed by New York City-based **KWR International Inc.**, a consulting firm specializing in a variety of areas including research, investment, trade and business development, business strategy and market entry programs.

KWR President Keith Rabin was lead analyst and project director for the study. He said the research focused on competitive rationale and how to pitch potential businesses on why they should invest in the region.

Capacity exists here to drive green economy

KWR analyzed 10 business sectors of renewable energy to determine capacity for supporting green business initiatives.

“What you have (in Western New York) is an underutilized capacity and diverse manufacturing areas,” Rabin said.

While manufacturing opportunities in a number of renewable energy sectors permeate the report, synergies also were found among production, research and development, distribution services and a number of other BNE-targeted industry clusters that offer economic development potential.

“The new, green economy offers Buffalo Niagara unique job-growth opportunities as alternative energy demand grows,” said Rabin.

The potential stems from its ability to provide manufacturing capacity in almost all alternative energy sectors, he said, a result of a more diverse and balanced industrial base than other regions in North American.

Might region become a green energy hub?



Jim Courtney

Keith Rabin, left, of KWR International, and the BNE's Thomas Kucharski want the Buffalo area to plug into renewable energy.

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Of the geographical advantages such as access to major population centers, its Great Lakes location, proximity to Canada plus a quality transportation infrastructure, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise President/CEO Thomas Kucharski said: “We are amassing the tools that could allow the region to establish itself as a North American center for the commercialization of green and renewable energy related products.”

The question, then, is how does the region make green energy a focal point?

As an example, Rabin said, Silicon Valley may be considered the country’s technology hub. But while there is no singular region that specializes in renewable energy, Kucharski said Buffalo Niagara could eventually become synonymous with it.

“The study will take us to the next level to be able to build a regional infrastructure and compete with top players in top industries,” he said. “We’ll be dreaming big and perhaps become the next center for what is a challenge nationally and internationally, in terms of how we supply energy in the future.”

Energy and jobs

A research study conducted by Keith Rabin of KWR International Inc. concluded that 10 specialty areas in alternative energy industries in the region could help grow jobs. The diversity among them, he said, also is a plus.

The 10 sectors were:

Renewable energy

- Wind
- Solar
- Hydrokinetic
- Geothermal
- Biomass
- Nuclear

Energy efficiency

- Energy transmission and storage
- Green buildings
- Transportation
- Waste remediation/recycling