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Report: New Mexico's Clean Energy Economy Begins by Investing in Workforce Development

Albuquerque, N.M – A recent report by the [University of New Mexico Center for Social Policy](#), commissioned by the [New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions](#), identified best practices and recommendations to help New Mexico transition to a clean energy economy in a just and equitable way. This report is part of a series of ongoing studies providing data and insight into New Mexico's best course to implement the Energy Transition Act.

Some key findings and recommendations from the report include:

- Given the economic challenges associated with COVID-19 and the drop in oil and gas revenue, the public is highly concerned about the state of the economy and appears ready to support aggressive steps to diversify the economy, including investing in clean energy workforce infrastructure.
- New Mexico's existing structure for clean energy workforce training and credentialing has promisingly strong foundations, especially among its two-year higher education institutions.
- A unified state strategy to support job development and align training with potential employers will be instrumental for a successful transition.
- The state has an opportunity to implement a set of statewide processes for helping students access high-quality training outside their immediate communities.
- The state must invest in accessible paid apprenticeships, flexible schedules, and online coursework, in a variety of languages other than English, to ensure prospective workers seeking training or retraining can succeed.

To view the complete report visit: [DWS - NM Clean Energy Workforce Report](#)

The research to complete this report was conducted June 1 – 24, 2020. A total of 1,864 individuals from across New Mexico participated via interviews, focus groups, and an online survey, which led to a comprehensive study that ensured community voices were integrated into the strategic planning for clean energy workforce development.

The following are reactions from community leaders who were part of the process to appropriate funding for this study and who played a key role in uplifting community voices from across the state in this study:

"As a result of coalition efforts statewide, and direct conversations with communities on the ground for the last several years, the DWS study couldn't have taken the shape that it did--providing us a glimpse and an opportunity to better understand from New Mexicans, what a just transition could mean for New Mexico," **said Rep. Angelica Rubio (D-35)**. "While the legislature has its flaws of moving forward on ideas that incorporate community voices, this study made it a priority. I look forward to the future, with our communities leading."

"This report represents a collective effort to ensure all of New Mexico's diverse community voices are included in the strategic planning for our state's transition toward clean energy," **said Dr. Gabriel Sánchez, executive director at UNM Center for Social Policy**. "Despite having to work around COVID-19, our team was able to hear from a large number of New Mexicans who expressed optimism in what the movement toward renewable energy can bring to the state, both in regard to jobs and economic development and to our environment."

"The DWS study sheds light on a critical component for a successful and just transition from fossil fuels to a clean energy economy: It must be built on a foundation of equity—ensuring rural and low-income communities are afforded every opportunity to be part of our state's future," **said Oriana Sandoval, executive director for the Center for Civic Policy**. "As our communities face the consequences of the gas and oil boom and bust cycles, they are demanding a new path to build a thriving, sustainable state. And as New Mexico continues to take actions on lessening our dependence on gas and oil revenues, we must prioritize frontline communities and build safety nets in which they can thrive and lead the state into a cleaner and more stable future."

"One of the things that really popped out for us with the report was the acknowledgement that the clean energy workforce lacks racial, ethnic, and gender diversity," **said James Jimenez, executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children**. "It's so important to consider diversity in any jobs program, and we're pleased that the DWS report not only addresses this need, but also includes remedies in its recommendations."

"Economic development and workforce training opportunities tailored to the diversity of our state's workforce, including in oil and gas country, are key to an equitable and sustainable future for all New Mexicans," **said María Romano, community organizer with Somos Un Pueblo Unido in Lea County**. "This report is grounded in the experiences of workers and families, especially in rural communities, and it provides a good starting point for policymakers who are planning for our future."

"The passage of the Energy Transition Act in 2019 was a strong first step to ensure that all New Mexicans are supported in a just transition to a clean energy future," **said Molly Taylor, deputy director of programs for Conservation Voters New Mexico**. "As New Mexico makes robust investments in renewable energy in the coming years, it is critical that the communities most impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels are centered in this work. The Four Corners region has been devastated by the coronavirus and the

crash of the oil and gas industry and the transition to renewable energy will bring nearly \$1 billion in investment and trigger \$40 million for worker transition. Rural and low-income communities, like the Four Corners region, should have access to this economic opportunity. We applaud the recommendations put forward by the Department of Workforce Study, and look forward to continued discussion to make these recommendations a reality.”

“The DWS study has allowed us to begin reimagining an economic future that puts our families first,” **said Alex Luna, lead organizer with NM CAFé.** “With the passage of the Energy Transition Act, many of our members in rural counties across Southern New Mexico finally see an opportunity for meaningful investment in their communities. The DWS report showed us that the desire for quality and sustainable jobs is found across New Mexico. The report also showed us that the state legislature will need to ensure training programs for green jobs that are accessible, bilingual, and affordable.”

“This study recognizes that ‘public, private and Tribal Nation partnerships’ are critically important for NM to move toward a clean energy economy. This is an exciting opportunity for Tribal communities,” **said Joseph Hernandez, Dine organizer for NAVA Education Project.** “If we are to succeed, it is clear that the racial, gender and income equity must be an integral part of New Mexico’s energy transition. We must make sure that jobs are available in rural and tribal areas, *not* just in Urban areas.”

“New Mexico can not only be a leader in the transition from dependence on fossil fuels to clean energy, but especially in ensuring that the transition is focused on people - our greatest resource,” **said Sanders Moore, executive director of Policy Solutions Institute.** “The DWS study shows us where our strengths lie, but also where we need to invest and prioritize so New Mexicans can thrive and build toward a clean energy future.”

BACKGROUND

Reps. Angelica Rubio and Javier Martinez, Sen. Benny Shendo, and a coalition of community organizations introduced the need for a Clean Energy Workforce Development Study during the 2019 legislative session. The effort resulted in a \$200,000 appropriation for the DWS to commission a study with the following objectives:

- Undergird the NM DWS requirement to support and implement elements of the Energy Transition Act;
- Prepare a report with recommendations on the opportunities for and barriers to accessing clean energy jobs in low-income and rural communities, both at the present time and in the future;
- Study and provide recommendations on the need for increased education, career and technical education, job training, and workforce development to help industries, workers and communities prepare for jobs in the clean energy economy; and
- Identify disadvantaged communities to prioritize for economic development opportunities in a sustainable and clean energy economy.

The final report will be provided to the Governor and presented by October 1, 2020, to the interim Economic and Rural Development Committee, which addresses these critical issues.

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