



Empowering Colorado

**Nonprofit Journalism Fellowship Funding Proposal
December 2020**

Project Title: Challenges Involved In Embracing Beneficial Electrification in Colorado

Organization Overview:

Colorado's vast energy resources, energy research institutions and energy policy debates provide the backdrop for an information ecosystem in which fact-based journalism focused on energy development can thrive. Energy impacts the health, economy and lifestyle of all Coloradans and citizens need quality journalism to make informed decisions. However, the business models available to most for-profit media no longer allow news organizations to dedicate sufficient resources to cover a topic layered with elements of science, business and public policy. Empowering Colorado presents an opportunity to change this dynamic and serve citizens, business leaders and public policy makers with quality journalism focused on all facets of Colorado energy development.

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit news organization backed by national organizations such as the [Institute for Nonprofit News \(INN\)](#) and [Local Independent Online News Publishers \(LION\)](#), Empowering Colorado represents not only evidence of Colorado's changing media landscape, it also serves as a cutting-edge solution to the problem of declining local media and inadequate coverage of energy issues. Quality news content developed by Empowering Colorado ensures citizens have access to fact-based information necessary to balance the aggressive and often non-factual information distributed by advocacy organizations.

Resources to Leverage:

Empowering Colorado is uniquely qualified to meet its journalistic mission to provide comprehensive energy coverage and play an important watchdog role. It not only presents a range of content across multiple platforms including website, newsletter, podcasts, social media and events, it also is mission-driven to improve Colorado's energy information ecosystem by offering support to other local media in the form of free content and access to reporters, data, graphics and expertise. Empowering Colorado's publications are directly delivered to more than 4,500 Coloradans and the growing news organization is building a reputation as a leader in quality energy journalism. Additionally, Empowering Colorado has the capacity to effectively analyze the vast array of Colorado energy data and produce quality data journalism thanks to a \$25,000 in-kind grant awarded by technology-services company Cloutel.

Project Summary:

Background: Beneficial electrification is an emerging trend across the United States to replace direct fossil fuel use (e.g., propane, heating oil, gasoline) with electricity in a way that reduces overall emissions and energy costs. In Colorado, energy officials are working to identify market trends, opportunities and solutions to encourage the adoption of the electrification across a range of sectors including transportation, industrial, residential and commercial so the state can meet 2025 and 2030 carbon reduction goals. But implementing beneficial electrification requires lawmakers, energy companies, business leaders and citizens to develop policies and incentives to encourage a transition away from fossil fuels.

Objective: Empowering Colorado would compile data and explore the various market opportunities, innovations, policy considerations and obstacles surrounding the adaptation of beneficial electrification. Empowering Colorado would personalize the issue through a variety of interviews with citizens, lawmakers, regulators and professionals impacted by the effort toward beneficial electrification. The in-depth journalistic effort would attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What is the currently level of fossil fuel use that can be mitigated over time through beneficial electrification?
2. What strategies developed by state lawmakers, regulators and utility companies exist to encourage adoption of beneficial electrification? Which strategies are proving effective? Which are not?
3. What regulations and policies need to be changed or created in order to achieve a level of electrification necessary to meet carbon reduction goals?
4. What market forces are at work that may inhibit a transition to electrification?
5. What level of public education needs to take place in order to encourage the adoption of electrification? What areas of the process are most misunderstood? Does this inhibit the adoption of beneficial electrification?

Process/Staff: Empowering Colorado will commit a team of three reporters to analyze various facets of the beneficial electrification issue and conduct research and analysis over a period of two months.

Presentation: The project will be presented as part of a multi-part in-depth series published over a period of two months on multiple platforms associated with Empowering Colorado including its website, Energy Examiner newsletter, podcasts and social media. All content and data compiled during the development of this project will be made available to local media free-of-charge with the stated purpose of enlightening citizens to the issue and the solutions underway and under consideration.

Events: Empowering Colorado will host a virtual and/or in-person event featuring prominent influencers with backgrounds in public policy, utility management and industry. The event will be free to the public and allow for robust discussion, debate and community feedback.

Project Goal and Community Benefits:

By shedding light on the issues surrounding beneficial electrification, citizens, business leaders and public-policy makers gain insight into the issues and the challenges involved in a broad adoption of the process so all involved may make informed decisions. As citizens are often skeptical about initiatives put forward by industry and government, Empowering Colorado is uniquely positioned to help Coloradans understand the complexities of Beneficial Electrification so they may make informed decisions.

Funding Request:

Empowering Colorado requests \$5,000 to conduct research and analysis and develop in-depth content and events. Of the \$5,000, \$2,000 will be used for operations, content distribution, promotion and publication.

Relevant links and datasets:

[Colorado Energy Office Report: Beneficial Electrification Market Potential in Colorado 2021-2030](#)