



## **Empowering Colorado**

**Nonprofit Journalism Fellowship Funding Proposal  
December 2020**

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### **Project Title: Developing Diversity in Colorado's Energy Industry**

#### **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:** According to the American Petroleum Institute, nearly three-quarters of employees in the oil and gas industry were white as of 2015. A 2019 report for state energy officials indicates the rank and file of the wind and solar sectors is slightly more diverse, but many of the highest paid jobs are dominated by white workers. The industry has also received criticism for being hostile to women and inhibiting their professional growth -- prompting the formation of advocacy organizations such as Colorado Women in Energy and Pink Petro. Following the killing of George Floyd, industry leaders across the energy spectrum publicly supported a call for greater diversity and initiatives to diversify the industry.

**Objective:** To sufficiently bring to bear the resources necessary to analyze diversity in the energy industry, Empowering Colorado will create a Journalism Fellowship. Over a period of three months, the Fellow will conduct in-depth reporting, compile employment data, analyze efforts to create change and profile individuals and companies in Colorado in order to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current state of diversity (racial, gender, economic background) of the various sectors of the energy industry in Colorado?
2. What are the best practices for measuring a standard of diversity?
3. How does it benefit organizations or companies to increase the diversity of their members or workforce?
4. What are different solutions in the marketplace of ideas for increasing diversity in the Colorado energy workforce and which are most viable?
5. What role should government, private industry and professional development organizations play in creating standards for and increasing diversity in the Colorado energy industry?

**Process:** The Fellow will work with university students (in the fields of data science and journalism) to answer the Fellowship questions, develop new ones and humanize the issue for readers by telling the stories of people who exemplify the changing landscape of workforce diversity. The Fellow will have access to the Cloutel data analysis and visualization services through our \$25,000 in-kind grant.

**Project Staff:**

Empowering Colorado will ensure all journalistic content is developed by a diverse set of reporters and editors necessary to ensure balance, insight and fairness. Empowering Colorado will be transparent about its reporting process and the staff members who contribute to the content.

**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.

**Project Goal and Community Benefits:**

By shedding light on the issue of diversity, the Empowering Colorado content will generate discussion and engagement among citizens, industry leaders, energy professionals and public policy makers, thereby encouraging positive change. If successful programs yield results, they will receive the notoriety that results from quality journalism so they may be adopted on a broader scale.

**Measuring Success:** Empowering Colorado will evaluate data from a preliminary reader survey and follow-up reader survey about what the audience has learned about diversity in the Colorado energy workforce. Empowering Colorado will also track changes resulting from our in-depth reporting.

**Timeline:** Empowering Colorado will spend January and February, 2021 fundraising for the fellowship, engaging partners and stakeholders, and reviewing fellowship applications. Empowering Colorado would hire the Fellow in mid-February. Publication of stories could begin in early March. The fellowship will run through late May, 2021.

**Funding Request:**

Empowering Colorado requests \$25,000 in matching funds to match our \$25,000 in-kind contribution. Of the \$15,000, \$10,000 will be paid to the Fellow for a three-month project and \$5,000 will be used for operations, e.g. content distribution, promotion and publication.

**Relevant links and datasets:**

<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2020/06/12/energy-industry-called-on-to-improve-diversity-788461>

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Colorado%20Employment&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S2401&hidePreview=false>

<https://datausa.io/about/datasets>

<https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-and-gender>

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-energy-gas-mining-oil/>

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/lara-ettenson/clean-energy-jobs-still-lead-worker-diversity-needed>

[https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019.04\\_metro\\_Clean-Energy-Jobs\\_Report\\_Muro-Tomer-Shivaran-Kane.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019.04_metro_Clean-Energy-Jobs_Report_Muro-Tomer-Shivaran-Kane.pdf)

<https://blog.energytrust.org/racial-disparities-in-the-energy-industry-lack-of-representation/>