

**UNM Just Transition to Green Energy Grand Challenge**  
**Level II Overview**

*Creating economic opportunities and equitable pollution reduction  
for communities in the transition to clean energy and climate resilience*

**I. What is the UNM Just Transition Grand Challenge?**

The University of New Mexico (UNM) Just Transition Grand Challenge is an interdisciplinary initiative that seeks to identify and evaluate the opportunities, challenges, and policy options for achieving an inclusive and equitable transition to a zero-carbon economy, with a focus on creating economic opportunities for disadvantaged communities and fossil fuel worker communities. The Just Transition team was one of three teams to receive a Level II Grand Challenge award from UNM in 2023, which provides two-years of internal seed funding to grow and develop the team and develop a plan for long-term sustainability to work on grand challenges of our time.

*A “just transition” seeks to ensure that “no people, workers, places, sectors, countries or regions are left behind in the move from a high-carbon to a low-carbon economy.” - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

**II. Goal of the Just Transition Grand Challenge**

The goal is to establish UNM campus-wide institute to lead policy-relevant research and technical assistance on just transition issues important to the state and the nation. The center would do the following:

- Policy-oriented academic research in interdisciplinary fields
- Policy analysis and support for state, local governments
- Technical assistance to governments and NGOs
- Training and work for grad and undergrad students
- Acquire funding from federal grants, state contracts and philanthropic contributions

**III. Major Substantive Focus Areas**

Just Transition to Green Energy					
Maximizing Economic Opportunity (with special focus on disadvantaged and fossil fuel communities)					Reducing Conventional Pollutants Along with GHGs
Understanding Facilitators and Barriers Among Diverse Communities	Identifying Low and Zero-Carbon Economic Opportunities	Maximizing Federal Funding to State Entities	Evaluating Effectiveness of Policies	Analyzing Policy Options and Recommending Policies	Development of Tools and Policies

**IV. Team**

<b>Convenors</b>	Rob DelCampo (Management); Gabe Pacyniak (Law); Gabe Sanchez (Political Science); Shannon Sanchez-Youngman (Population Health); Melanie Sayuri Dominguez (Program Manager; Political Science)				
<b>Affiliated UNM faculty</b>	Janie Chermak (Economics); Renia Ehrenfeucht (Architecture and Planning); Carmela Roybal (Native American Budget and Policy Institute (NABPI)); Joni Palmer (NM Env. Finance Center); Claudia Pratesi (Population Health); Yuting Yang (Economics)				
<b>External Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Somos un Pueblo Unido</li> <li>• Center for Civic Policy</li> <li>• Naeva</li> <li>• NM Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS)</li> <li>• [NMSU Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center]</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NM Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department</li> <li>• Albuquerque Sustainability Office</li> <li>• North American Wind Research and Training Center (at Mesalands Community College)</li> <li>• Navajo Technical University</li> </ul>		

**V. Completed, Ongoing, and Pending Work**

<b>Completed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-sponsored Just Transition town hall with Office of Speaker Javier Martinez, Natural Resources Journal</li> <li>• White paper for NM Dept. of Workforce Solutions on Clean Energy Workforce Development</li> <li>• White paper on environmental justice impacts of large stationary greenhouse gas emitters in New Mexico</li> <li>• White paper on Just Transition for NM EPSCoR town hall</li> <li>• UNM Clinic supported NGOs with comments on clean energy grant implementation</li> <li>• Received philanthropic funding for Climate Justice Legal Fellow</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-methods research for <i>Somos Un Pueblo Unido</i> on attitudes of Latino oil-field workers to the clean energy transition, access to unemployment insurance, wage replacement, and other state programs</li> <li>• NSF-funded project with Univ. of Michigan on developing an equitable and just approach to siting advanced nuclear reactor facilities</li> <li>• Federally funded project focused on providing young adults in rural counties of the state with STEM training</li> <li>• Providing technical support for state efforts to increase competitiveness for federal funding, including through testimony at legislative committee</li> </ul>
<b>Pending</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$2 million EPA grant for cumulative impacts tool with community and technical partners</li> <li>• \$200,000 grant from County of Santa Fe for landscape research of potential sustainability center</li> </ul>

**VI. Proposed Activities for Next Two Years (Work-in-Progress)**

Underline = completed

<b>First Half Year: Nov. 1, 2023 – Apr. 31, 2024</b>	<b>Second Half Year: May 1, 2024 Oct. 31, 2024</b>	<b>Third Half Year: Nov. 1, 2024 Apr. 31, 2025</b>	<b>Fourth Half Year May 1, 2025 Oct. 31, 2025</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Hire project manager and fellows</u></li> <li>• Develop strategic plan</li> <li>• Receive feedback on plan from internal and external partners</li> <li>• Plan and host speaker series</li> <li>• Identify funding opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for major federal, philanthropic funding opportunities</li> <li>• Submit articles for publication based on completed research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan national, regional convening</li> <li>• Develop plan for Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host national convening</li> <li>• Finalize Center/Sustainability Plan</li> <li>• Seek funding for Center</li> </ul>

**VII. Opportunities to Engage**

<b>External organizations</b>	Sign up to be an external partner; identify opportunities and gaps where Just Transition team can add value; provide input on plans; partner to co-create knowledge and technical assistance models and apply for grants.
<b>UNM Faculty</b>	Become an affiliated faculty member; provide input on plans; identify and be informed about related funding opportunities; partner on sponsored projects and publications; participate in speaker series.
<b>Students</b>	Be informed about and apply for R.A. and fellow positions; participate in speaker series; take classes on related subject matter in various departments.

**VIII. Stay informed and get engaged!**

Contact program manager Melanie Sayuri Dominguez ([msonntag@unm.edu](mailto:msonntag@unm.edu)) to be added to a mailing list and participate as an external organization, UNM faculty, or a UNM graduate or undergraduate student.