



Challenge – Community and Employee Support

Dedicated and meaningful support for transitioning communities is critical so that communities that lose employment, tax and royalty payments, and other benefits associated with existing generation and production facilities don't have to carry the weight of the transition alone.

As the energy industry transitions to cleaner generation sources, rural communities where existing generation is located will be challenged by the loss of employment, tax and royalty payments, and other benefits associated with existing generation plants and fossil fuel-related industries. Any transition to a cleaner economy will require economic development, retraining and educational opportunities and other support for affected rural energy-producing employees and communities. Partners from non-profit and for-profit to federal and state officials to community leaders need to work together to identify and deploy solutions that ensure employees and communities get the assistance they need for the just and equitable transition they deserve, today and in the future.

Building Opportunity

Supporting access and opportunities to train and retrain employees currently employed in fossil fuel-based generation industries would help alleviate the burden of a transition to a low-carbon energy economy. Such programs support retention of employee talent and economic investment that might otherwise be lost, and attracts new development to diversify the local economy.

Complementing these initiatives is the need for high-speed internet. High-speed internet access is uniformly available in urban areas, but for rural communities, it remains highly variable. As core components of daily life have migrated onto the internet – whether that's online learning or remote work, new recipes or news, shopping or socializing – reliable access to high-speed internet has become key to economic development, educational attainment and overall quality of life.

Logistical and cost hurdles continue to present challenges to laying the necessary fiber or otherwise connecting communities currently without high-speed internet. However, these challenges are far from insurmountable and the value and opportunity of high-speed internet connectivity to those currently without is surely sufficient to warrant the effort and cost. With this access, new opportunities – economic, educational, health, leisure, and more – will finally be available to rural communities, as they have long been for their urban counterparts. Examples of improvements in these areas include:

Education and Retraining Support

Create Education Fund for Impacted Employees

Clarify Eminent Domain and Easement Access for Fiber

Increase High-speed Internet Access

Financial Support

Complimenting these improvements is the need for financial support to help bridge the loss of income and revenue and to assist community transition during economic development. Many rural communities historically built around energy face a challenging transition from carbon-intensive to clean energy generation. Previous sources of wages, tax revenue, retirement and health benefits, and more are likely to be severely curtailed or eliminated as mines and power plants, among others, are phased-out of the electricity production cycle.

In many of these areas, there are limited alternative opportunities for replacing these financial resources, which are critical for supporting families, infrastructure and public services, among others. The rapid timeline for the energy transition applies additional pressure on these communities, as they are faced with the prospect of obtaining new skills and bringing-in new businesses in the near-term and on a large scale, both independently formidable challenges.

These communities have long invested, largely behind the scenes, in the broader benefit and success of their states and region. Now, they would benefit from reciprocal investment to ease the burden of the energy transition and help make it possible for these areas to stay on their feet as they turn to new economic opportunities. Opportunities to make a different in this area include:

Incentivize Business Relocation to Impacted Areas

Dedicate Grant-writers

Fund the Office of Just Transition (Colorado)

Replenish Lost Tax Revenue

Authorize Economic Districts (New Mexico)

Pay Renewable Royalties

