

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NORTHWEST COLORADO CHOSEN AS ONE OF FIVE REGIONS NATIONWIDE TO
RECEIVE ENERGY COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE COMMUNITY GRANT**

RIFLE, COLORADO (December 23, 2024) – The Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative (NCEI), a program under the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC), has been awarded a [\\$75,000 Energy Communities Alliance Grant](#), marking a significant step in supporting the region’s energy transition efforts. Northwest Colorado is one of only five regions in the country to receive this funding, reflecting its proactive approach to navigating complex energy challenges and opportunities.

“This award builds on the foundation we’ve established, positioning Colorado as a leader in energy transition strategies,” said Matt Solomon, project manager for NCEI.

The grant will enable NCEI to launch its next phase of work, focusing on creating a regional coalition and fostering collaboration across multiple states. This phase includes the development of a multi-state stakeholder map, guided by the Department of Energy’s Energy Transition Playbook. The stakeholder map will connect local governments, private industries, educational institutions, and community organizations, ensuring coordinated efforts to strengthen the workforce and stabilize the tax base.

Economic Development Districts (EDDs) from rural, energy-burdened communities are serving as the golden thread in building the framework for a Regional Hub. By leveraging the expertise and networks of these districts, NCEI is ensuring that local needs and perspectives remain at the forefront of the planning process.

To further support this effort, Wade Haerle has joined the NCEI team as the Field Coordinator. Drawing on a wealth of experience in community engagement and infrastructure development, Haerle’s professional background includes spearheading energy and infrastructure projects in Maryland, founding the Energy Impact Strategies (EIS) consulting firm in Colorado, and advancing regional water initiatives such as the Wolf Creek Reservoir project in Northwestern Colorado. His background with organizations including Club 20 further demonstrates his ability to mobilize stakeholders and build consensus around regional priorities. In this role, Haerle will lead the development of the stakeholder mapping and facilitate engagement across Economic Development Districts in Utah and Arizona, with upcoming meetings scheduled with groups from New Mexico, Wyoming, and the Navajo Nation. This regional approach underscores the interconnected nature of energy transitions and highlights the importance of collective problem-solving.

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The progress achieved through earlier initiatives, such as educational outreach supported by the Energywerx Capacity Building for Repurposing Energy Assets grant and workforce impact modeling conducted with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) through the Communities Local Energy Action Program (LEAP) technical grant, has prepared the region for this new phase.

As Northwest Colorado transitions away from coal, with three mines and two coal-fired power plants set to close by 2028, the region faces substantial economic challenges. This grant will help address these impacts by advancing plans for a regional energy hub that integrates renewable energy, fossil fuels, and nuclear power. By focusing on economic resilience, knowledge-sharing, and stakeholder engagement, NCEI seeks to empower communities and create long-term stability for the region.

For more information about the Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative or to learn how to get involved, visit www.AGNC.org/NCEI.

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About AGNC (www.agnc.org) The Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) serves as the Council of Governments for Garfield, Mesa, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties and functions as the Economic Development District (EDD), as designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for those counties, with the addition of Routt County. AGNC’s mission is to advocate, inform, and reflect the needs of its members by promoting the values, industries, and economies of Northwest Colorado.

About NCEI (www.agnc.org/ncei) The Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative (NCEI), operating under the purview of the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC), stands at the forefront of community-driven initiatives in Northwest Colorado. The advisory board members are: former Colorado State House Majority Leader and Colorado Mesa University (CMU) President Emeritus Tim Foster, former Colorado State Senator Bob Rankin, Mesa County Commissioner Cody Davis, Garfield County Commissioner Mike Samson, Rio Blanco County Commissioner Doug Overton, former Moffat County Commissioner Ray Beck, and AGNC Executive Director Tiffany Dickenson. Former Town of Eagle Council Member Matt Solomon is the project manager.

About ECA (www.energyca.org) Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) is a non-profit membership organization of local governments and nuclear communities adjacent to or affected by U.S. Department of Energy activities. The mission of ECA is to bring together local government officials to share information, establish policy positions, and promote community interests to address an increasingly complex set of environmental, regulatory, and economic development needs.