



LEGAL DIRECTOR JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

We are seeking an experienced Legal Director who will be dedicated to NMELC's mission of working with communities to advance environmental justice and human rights. The NMELC Legal Director will be a talented leader with strong litigation and management skills who is committed to social justice and community-focused advocacy. The Legal Director will help to build NMELC's litigation capacity and will help to leverage resources to make a significant impact in environmental justice work across the state of New Mexico.

Founded in 1987, the New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC) is a nonprofit, public interest law firm whose mission is to use legal advocacy and representation to protect New Mexico's communities and their air, water, and land in the fight for environmental justice. NMELC provides free and low-cost legal services on environmental matters statewide and works with clients — often individuals, neighborhood associations, environmental organizations, Tribes, and Pueblos — seeking to protect the environment and defend environmental justice issues. For over 30 years, our attorneys have represented clients on over 300 cases across New Mexico. Our areas of expertise include: solid waste, hard-rock mining, uranium mining, air quality, urban sprawl, water quality and quantity, dairies, oil and gas extraction, and climate change. Through legal advocacy and representation, along with public education and outreach, NMELC works to effect systemic, statewide environmental policy change — to ensure New Mexico's communities have clean air, water, and land now and into the future.

JOB TITLE: Legal Director
START DATE: April 2021

SALARY: 75K to 92K
REPORTS TO: Executive Director

JOB SUMMARY:

Reporting to the Executive Director and serving as a member of the management team, the Legal Director will be vital in furthering NMELC's re-envisioning of their work advocating for environmental justice for especially frontline communities across New Mexico. The Legal Director will manage a 6-person Legal Department that includes staff attorneys and a paralegal. The Legal Director will oversee NMELC's legal strategy and ensure legal services provided to clients and communities are of excellent quality. The Legal Director will also be involved in policy development, advocacy, and larger development/fundraising initiatives that help to support and expand NMELC's legal services.

JOB LOCATION: New Mexico

Note: NMELC is currently following a remote work plan due to the continued pandemic. ***Applicants must live in New Mexico and/or be familiar with New Mexico history and culture.***

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS: Full-time/exempt annual salary of 75K to 92K depending on experience. After a qualifying period, benefits include health, dental, and vision insurance, 403(b), vacation and sick leave.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Manages all aspects of NMELC's litigation work in coordination with Executive Director and legal team, and ensures strong, effective, high quality, and ethical client

representation that proactively advances NMELC's organizational mission, strategic priorities and annual goals.

- Partners with the Executive Director and other members of management on high level organizational management, developing strategic frameworks, and supporting budget setting.
- Guides and refines NMELC legal strategies, legislative, and policy work to expand environmental justice legal services across the State.
- Oversees and directs the investigation and development of cases before commencing litigation, builds litigation teams with staff attorneys, cooperating counsel, and nonprofit and community partners.
- Supports staff attorneys' and paralegal's professional development and mentors staff attorneys with various levels of experience as needed.
- Oversees and directs requests for assistance (RFA) to ensure that equity is at the center of the process for selecting clients and that RFAs align with NMELC mission and criteria.
- Maintains an individual caseload of developing and active litigation and engages in client-directed litigation at various court levels and including appellate work.
- Leads legal team meetings, models and facilitates effective and open communication within the legal team and throughout the organization.
- Keeps the Executive Director, legal team, and larger staff informed of relevant legal and policy developments.
- Establishes and oversees systems for promoting information flow, assessing priorities, driving decisions, and increasing efficiencies
- Prepares and presents reports to the larger staff, Board of Directors, and larger community
- Represents NMELC at national, state, and local meetings, conferences, in the media, the community, and at relevant events.
- Supports larger public education efforts, e.g. through community engagement and outreach.
- Fosters and cultivates strong relationships with legal advocates, clients, and community members in other environment/environmental justice and social justice organizations and movements.
- Participates in fundraising activities and events including engaging with donors and funders.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

The NMELC Legal Director must have relevant and extensive litigation experience and be highly knowledgeable of the courts, as well as a collaborative, flexible, committed, and resilient leader. The Legal Director will keep the Executive Director, legal team, and larger staff informed on relevant legal and policy developments. The successful candidate will collaborate with the legal team to curate NMELC's case docket and will shape and direct the organization's legal strategies, policy work, and priorities.

- Must embrace the Law Center's mission and be dedicated to creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment and working alongside communities on environmental justice issues.

- Experience working in the nonprofit and/or public sector.
- Knowledge of and commitment to the importance and integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and practices.
- Demonstrated success building strong and effective teams defined by excellence, professionalism, trust, mutual respect and creating cultures of inclusion.
- A deep understanding of how litigation, policy and education strategies are employed to ensure environmental justice principles and human rights, to expand civil rights and change cultural norms.
- Appellate litigation experience (desirable but not essential).
- Knowledge of environmental law, environmental justice, and/or social justice issues.
- Abiding commitment to equity and justice in litigation and policy.
- Excellent interpersonal communication and public speaking skills, including the ability to convey complex legal issues into language that is accessible to a wide range of audiences.
- Exceptional listening and negotiating skills to facilitate conversation and drive decisions in a consensus-driven team and organization.
- Capacity for travel and participation in events outside regular work hours.

PREFERRED SKILLS:

- Bilingual (Especially Spanish and/or Native Languages)
- Education and/or experience working with LGBTQ, frontline, *colonias*, rural, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities
- Education and/or experience with environmental justice issues

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

- At least 5 - 10 years of trial and appellate litigation experience in state and federal courts, including class actions, with a strong background in environmental, constitutional, and/or civil rights law
- Admitted and in good standing with the New Mexico State Bar or eligible for admission
- Environmental, environmental justice/social justice education, background, and/or experience

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS: Prolonged periods of sitting at a desk and working on a computer. Ability to lift up to 25 pounds at a time. Periodic ability to travel long distances.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, March 5, 2021

Applicants should submit a resume, cover letter, two writing samples minimum, and three references electronically to Dr. Virginia Necochea, Executive Director at vnecochea@nmelc.org. All required documents must be submitted electronically. Incomplete submissions will not be considered. Interviews may be conducted via online video conference based on guidance from government/health agencies.

The NMELC is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factor. Persons of color, women and LGBTQ+ candidates are encouraged to apply. Learn more at www.nmelc.org.