



## **LEGAL DIRECTOR JOB ANNOUNCEMENT**

**As part of a new phase in NMELC’s growth, we created a position for a Legal Director. We seek a dedicated leader with strong litigation and management skills who will support NMELC’s mission of working with communities to advance environmental justice across the state of New Mexico. The Legal Director will work closely with the Executive Director in cultivating a renewed vision at NMELC that integrates diversity, equity, and justice. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), women and LGBTQ+ candidates are encouraged to apply.**

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.

<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	<b>Legal Director</b>	<b>SALARY:</b>	<b>75K to 92K</b>
<b>START DATE:</b>	<b>June 2021</b>	<b>REPORTS TO:</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>

### **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 our work advocating for environmental justice for especially frontline communities across New Mexico. The Legal Director will manage a Legal Department that currently includes five 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 or be willing to relocate to New Mexico and should 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, sick leave, holidays and sabbatical.

## **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 requests for assistance (RFA) to ensure that equity is at the center of the process for selecting casework and that RFAs align with NMELC mission and criteria.
- 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.
- Mentors staff attorneys with various levels of experience as needed and supports staff attorneys' and paralegal's professional development.
- Maintains an individual caseload, engaging 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 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 staff, Board of Directors, community, and the public.
- Represents NMELC at national, state, and local meetings, conferences, in the media, in 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:**

- Must have extensive litigation experience and be a collaborative, committed, and resilient leader.
- Must embrace the Law Center's mission and be dedicated to working alongside communities on environmental justice issues.
- Knowledge of and commitment to the importance and integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and practices.
- Experience working in the nonprofit and/or public sector.

- 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.
- Knowledge of environmental law, environmental justice, civil rights law, and 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.

**PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Appellate litigation experience.
- 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 EXPERIENCE:**

- 5 - 10 years of litigation experience in administrative, state, and/or federal courts, 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, and participate in events outside regular work hours.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: Monday, May 10, 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](mailto: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](http://www.nmelc.org).