



## Stewardship in Community

New Mexico is called the Land of Enchantment and indeed, those of us who live here are grateful to be sustained by the beauty and wisdom of our natural surroundings. Many in New Mexico are descendants of societies who made their homes here before Western concepts of “wilderness” and “natural resources” arrived, and the sense of interconnected and reciprocal relationships between humans and the environment is very much alive in our cultures today. The sense of home applies not only to the space within the walls of our dwellings, but extends to the horizons and includes a myriad of ecosystems and cultural landscapes. Our communities thrive in well-nourished places, and as stewards of place, we will sow the seeds for the future home of generations to come.

As we face growing disruption due to climate change, it is our frontline communities – those who experience the “first and the worst” of the consequences of climate change – that will be the primary focus of the Foundation’s support. Frontline communities include tribal and rural communities, and in urban areas, lower and middle income families and communities of color living in areas that have been negatively impacted by poor infrastructure and industrial practices. In New Mexico, many frontline communities have also borne the burden of historic disinvestment and environmental injustices for centuries, and have suffered disproportionately the negative health impacts of industrial pollution.

We cannot create the path to a just and resilient future if we are not grounded in our connection to history and place. Transformative practices that contribute to healing, equity, and enduring resilience are a critical part of how we move forward. Such work requires deep recognition of past and on-going wounds to people and place, proactive approaches centered around shared vision, and mutually beneficial partnerships that go beyond a single issue or project. Respect for and learning across diverse belief systems and ways of knowing will be essential to establishing common ground.

There are many ways that this work can take form, and intentional and equitable partnerships are integral to this work. Partnerships may be diverse in expertise and skillsets, but they must center leadership with frontline communities first—technical expertise and practitioners from outside these communities are there at the request of community leaders to augment and support.

## Stewardship in Community Framework Leverage Points

**Building Links Between Cultural Health and Ecosystem Health** – This leverage point works at the intersection of ecosystem health and traditional and regenerative practices in terms of how we inhabit and interact with our environment. This can take many forms in both rural and urban settings, from ecological restoration work to incorporating local traditional building and design into community planning efforts, to honoring sacred sites and land-based cultural practices. The foundation sees a deep intrinsic relationship between cultural resilience and ecological resilience, and recognizes the relevance of preservation of indigenous languages to this work.

**Environmental Justice and Health Equity** – Across our state, there is much work to be done to heal the wounds of historical and on-going industrial impacts. The industrial burden alone is heavy, but at the same time, we are also called increasingly to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to mitigate its negative health impacts. We know that we cannot effectively plan for the *future* of place without also coming to terms with the *history* of place. Community-based efforts that build capacity with those most deeply impacted so that their concerns and desires can meaningfully inform policy making and long term resource allocation for infrastructure adaptation will be prioritized.

**Energy Equity** – As we move from an extractive to a regenerative economy, the foundation will support capacity building at the community level (reaching beyond a single organization) that creates healthy feedback loops between policy development and implementation on the ground and approaches that employ cross-sector partnerships to develop creative solutions. Equitable access to affordable renewable energy, increased energy efficiency, and inclusive economic diversification strategies in communities that will feel the deepest economic impacts of our state’s energy transition are critical areas of focus for this work.

**Water Equity** – *El agua es vida* – Water is life. Its presence sustains us and its flow through our communities connects us to one another. Resilient relationships between communities are called for, because in an arid state like New Mexico, challenges with water will only get worse as temperatures increase and precipitation becomes less predictable in coming decades. Quantity and quality of groundwater and surface water resources, healthy watersheds that produce robust stream flows, and reliable water infrastructure are all critical to protect through multiple legal, regulatory, and planning processes. The foundation will prioritize work that advances long term equitable and inclusive water planning in and with frontline communities that builds shared resilience to respond to current and future water challenges.

Please note: **Environmental education and outdoor learning** programs will be considered under our [Education](#) priority area and must align with the leverage points for that priority area. Equitable approaches that promote learning across local community-level history and cultural perspectives, traditional wisdom and traditional ecological knowledge, and culturally relevant multi-lingual approaches will be prioritized.