

## **Minnesota 100% Renewables & Decarbonization Partnership with State Government & University of Minnesota**

Minnesota is positioned to be a leading state for progress on clean energy and carbon reduction. The state's renewable energy 25% standard was met in 2018, 7 years ahead of schedule, wind energy is the cheapest energy resource, and the state now has over 60,000 jobs in clean energy. With no indigenous fossil fuels, Minnesota's understanding and experience with renewable energy benefits is solidifying. The 2007 Next Generation Energy Act sets state economy-wide goals of 30% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2025 and 80% by 2050. The electricity sector is on track to meet the target because of coal retirements, renewable energy growth, and to some extent, natural gas. Transportation is now the biggest emitter, and the agriculture, industry, buildings, and waste sectors are not making adequate progress.<sup>1</sup>

Minnesota is the only US state with a divided legislature, and the Republican controlled Senate is an obstacle. Some northern Minnesota Democrats, especially in the Senate, also claim that their heavily industrial economy (steel, taconite, mining) can't function with 100% renewable energy. Senators were not on the ballot in 2018. A number of vulnerable Republican Senators are likely to lose in 2020 if the electorate behaves as they did in the midterm, and the Senate has only a two vote majority. Those dynamics mean Senators in those swing districts may be open to aggressive clean energy policies in the 2020 legislative session, and if not the legislature is likely to be supportive in 2021.

The new Walz administration is committed to aggressive climate action and 100% clean energy policy. Two leading cabinet members, the Commissioner of Commerce (Steve Kelley) and Commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency (Laura Bishop), are leading the charge. Bishop is convening regular meetings of key agency heads to advance a strategy including executive actions to be rolled out in the summer and new metrics to guide an implementation plan. Bishop also chairs the Environmental Quality Board, an interagency group of cabinet members reporting to the Governor which coordinate cross-agency environmental and energy policy.

Based on conversations with Commissioners Kelley and Bishop and others, it is clear there is a need for additional capacity both within and outside state government, and that the University of Minnesota can play a critical role in advancing state goals and policies.

The University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment (IonE) and Energy Transition Lab (ETL) have adopted an Impact Goal of building a carbon neutral Minnesota. IonE has some 150 affiliated faculty from many different disciplines and campuses across the state. ETL is coordinating University experts in support of the carbon neutral goal, to harness research capacity in needed areas and to translate and amplify the existing research that can support the work, and to connect faculty and energy program leaders within the University to external stakeholders. ETL has an extensive network of stakeholders and its leader, Ellen Anderson, is a respected state energy thought leader. ETL and IonE have a unique access to state legislators and state government leaders, given Anderson's background as a former State Senator and PUC chair and architect of Minnesota's clean energy laws, two other colleagues with years

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<sup>1</sup> See MPCA website, <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air/greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>

of legislative experience, and a proposed new policy fellow who is a current legislative clean energy champion, Jamie Long.

IonE/ETL have prioritized legislator engagement as a top strategy. In Spring 2019 they are leading two initiatives. One is to provide a “truth squad” to issue energy fact sheets and testimony to legislative committees to educate legislators and to debunk right-wing misinformation spread by a local “think tank” about the reliability and cost of renewable energy, fossil fuels, and nuclear. The second strategy is to engage legislators directly through a series of convenings. The first policy forum in June will attract dozens of bipartisan legislators to hear about clean energy policies and implementation from around the world, the US, and from Minnesota city and corporate leaders. The theory of change is that getting the legislators out of the Capitol and in a setting where they can talk to their colleagues informally will advance bipartisan collaboration. Providing a global and national context will help them understand that these ideas are mainstream and taking root in places that share Minnesota’s cold climate and traditional heritage of many long-time lawmakers (northern European). Minnesota business leaders and city leaders about why and how they are advancing clean energy is an influential constituency for legislators. In the Minnesota House, approximately one-third of members are newly elected, and many of them ran on clean energy platforms. Most of them are not on the energy committee, and during the legislative process they might hear about one or two energy bills, without the bandwidth to understand them in detail. We will present a range of policy approaches so the Republicans will have some comfort with policies they might support (nuclear) and all legislators will be able to understand trade-offs and make sense of the different choices. This clean energy kickoff event will begin a two-year process of engagement to push legislators.

At the same time the IonE/ETL team will focus on key areas of work to advance economy wide carbon reduction, and work closely with state government to boost their capacity, provide analysis and research needed, and convene stakeholders. The University work will likely focus on sectors that need the most attention, agriculture, industry, and cross cutting issues.

### **About Institute on the Environment/Energy Transition Lab**

As an institution with a broad and deep base of expertise and knowledge, a reputation for academic rigor and independent inquiry, and the ability to act as a neutral convener, the University of Minnesota is poised to contribute unique value to Minnesota’s multi-sector ecosystem of energy-focused organizations working on climate change, and as a land grant university, to work towards equitable, statewide practical solutions. ETL can have meaningful impact by supporting research and engagement across the university, in partnership and collaboration with external experts and stakeholders, to develop and test the viability of replicable, scalable solutions to climate mitigation from local to global levels. Minnesota can be a laboratory for the Midwest, the U.S., and the world. Minnesota’s progress on renewable energy and carbon reduction, both through governmental and private sector initiatives over the last decade, positions the state to demonstrate how to achieve a highly efficient, innovative, and prosperous economy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Minnesota has few fossil fuels and has relied heavily on energy imports, adding to the state’s incentive to decarbonize. As a vertically integrated, traditionally regulated utility state, Minnesota can serve as an important model for the more than half of U.S. states that are similarly regulated. Finding the solutions to decarbonization in this context will provide repeatable solutions for much of the U.S.

In partnership with state government leaders, ETL/IonE will

- Conduct a mapping analysis of university experts and public and private organizations outside the university who do decarbonization research and analysis, including key areas of focus and research questions.
- Host high-profile, multi-disciplinary and bipartisan convenings of UMN experts, external partners, and stakeholders to examine decarbonization needs and opportunities in Minnesota and identify gaps and needed research questions, projects, and potential collaborations.
- Deepen engagement with key organizations and leaders in specific sectors and communities to support work needed, targeting sectors like agriculture, industry and rural and low-income communities.
- Convene and support targeted, multi-disciplinary solutions teams of UMN researchers and external partners to work on key decarbonization topics. This work may involve targeted research, demonstration projects, or communications.
- Serve as highly credible knowledge broker about critical energy transition topics by synthesizing and amplifying faculty and government research and activities towards decarbonization.

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Institute on the Environment*

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## Position Description

Title: Energy Research Project Specialist	Hours: 0.8 FTE, Temporary
Job Code: 8352P4	Annualized Salary Range for 1 FTE: \$51,000 - \$70,000
Department: Institute on the Environment	Created On:
Reports to: Ellen Anderson	Last Revision Date:

The Energy Research Project Specialist is a part-time, temporary position available from June 2019 to February 2020. The Project Specialist will contribute to Energy Transition Lab's research and education efforts, as well as develop a new program aimed at providing state lawmakers the ability to study clean energy and climate change research and policy.

## Principal Duties and Responsibilities

40%	<p><b>Conduct research on Minnesota's clean energy system</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with Landscape Assessment of energy organizations, organizing efforts and research pertinent to Minnesota</li> <li>Prepare written products summarizing complex energy topics into easy to understand formats</li> <li>Research legal and policy considerations of clean energy development on tribal lands</li> <li>Provide research and analysis for state and local governments considering options for reducing carbon pollution</li> <li>Supervise student research assistants</li> <li>Other topics as assigned</li> </ul>
30%	<p><b>Develop Clean Energy Legislative Fellows Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate existing opportunities for training and advanced study of energy topics for law makers</li> <li>Identify program characteristics which would attract legislative participants from varying backgrounds and political affiliation</li> <li>Design program components and curriculum</li> <li>Create admission criteria and application process</li> <li>Develop budget and assist with identifying funding sources</li> </ul>
20%	<p><b>Support ETL convening and events</b></p>
10%	<p><b>Miscellaneous</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As time permits, co-teach in related topic areas.</li> <li>As time permits, support other Energy Transition Lab activities as assigned.</li> </ul>

## Required Qualifications:

- Minimum of 3 years professional experience and knowledge of energy policy, regulatory and/or technical areas, including experience with state and/or federal lawmaking and regulatory environments
- Advanced degree in energy, policy, law or other related field
- Working knowledge of state, national and international climate & carbon policy
- Familiarity with Minnesota legislative process
- Excellent communication, research, and writing skills
- Organized and strong attention to detail

- Ability to manage up and down
- Ability to prioritize workload and efficient multi-tasker
- Must be highly motivated individual who can take charge of projects with minimal direction/oversight
- Experience communicating with high-level leaders

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- 10 years professional experience in energy policy, regulatory and/or technical areas

**Working Conditions:**

The majority of the work in this position is performed in a campus office setting.