

Uplifting Tribal Sovereignty through “Just Transition” Investments

Angelica Wright



TRIBAL SOLAR
ACCELERATOR FUND

GRID Alternatives

What is Just Transition?

“A Just Transition in tribal communities” involves shifting power to local communities as they invest in housing, food systems, and local businesses to create economies that honor Indigenous knowledge, reflect community values, forge equitable partnerships, and restore the land (Jessica Stago, the Native American Economic Initiatives Director).



Energy in Indian Country



Federally recognized Tribes are sovereign nations exercising government-to-government relations with the United States.

- Land management, permitting, or ownership differences between Tribal and non-Tribal land

Indian Country holds millions of acres of energy-bearing territory which offers some excellent potential for renewable energy development and programs.

- Tribal land in the United States represents approximately 2% of the country's total landmass and holds more than 5% of solar photovoltaic potential (Doris, Lopez, and Beckley 2013).

Solar Radiance Map



This map provides annual average solar radiation data for the United States. The data is based on a 30-year average (1981-2010) and is presented in kWh/m². The map shows that the highest solar radiation is received in the southwestern United States, particularly in the desert regions of California, Arizona, and Nevada. Radiation decreases as one moves north and east. Source: NREL, 2010.

Solar Power Generation on Tribal Land



Figure 8. Concentrating solar power generation potential by reservation

Background Concept

Sovereignty is a legal word for an ordinary concept— the authority to self-govern. Hundreds of treaties, along with the Supreme Court, the President, and Congress, have repeatedly affirmed that tribal nations retain their inherent powers of self-government. These treaties, executive orders, and laws have created a fundamental contract between tribes and the United States. Sovereignty allows tribes to apply cultural and social governing structures that are not seen in other landscapes.



Background Concept

Energy Sovereignty

Exerting sovereign power over resources and governance is a catalyst for renewable energy development.

Tribal sovereignty motivates renewable energy development through promoting goals of energy self-sufficiency and independence, environmental sustainability, economic development, and community resiliency” (p. 22).



About GRID Alternatives

Our vision is a transition to renewable energy that includes everyone.

Our mission is to make renewable energy technology and job training accessible to frontline communities.

Our impact model:

People: social justice

Planet: environmental justice

Employment: economic opportunity



GRID Perspective on a Just Transition in Indian Country

- Energy self-sufficiency and independence (combines sovereignty and self-determination)
- Environmental Sustainability (environmental benefits)
- Economic Development (economic benefits)
- Community Resiliency (social benefits)



Blackfeet Community College Training, 2023



Ute Mountain Ute Towaoc, CO, 2020



Ojo Encino Chapter, 2022



Pueblo of Santa Ana, 2022

About The National Tribal Program

GRID established the National Tribal Program in 2010 to partner with indigenous communities to reach their renewable energy goals. The National Tribal Program focuses primarily on Solar PV Installation and workforce development to promote energy sovereignty and energy justice.



Program Staff

11 staff members experienced in project & construction management, solar installation, training and educated in environmental policy and federal and tribal governments.



Julius Billie & Yulissia Raphealito, Dine



Thelma Wall, Blackfeet

About the Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund

- Mission - to catalyze the growth of solar energy and expand solar job opportunities in tribal communities across the United States.
- Vision- Our vision for Indian Country is a transition to energy sovereignty that is educational, entrepreneurial, and completely renewable.
- Priorities - to support the growing potential of tribal leadership in energy and the renewable energy generation potential on tribal lands by:
 - Providing grant funding for new solar projects for tribes; tribal facility and residential projects, energy planning, large scale projects.
 - Support individuals through; experiential learning, scholarship and internship opportunities, and professional development.

2018-2019

- Total Grant Funding: \$633,791
- Total # of Grantees: 7
- Total kW installed: 774kW

2019-2020

- Total Grant Funding: \$1,583,181
- Total # of Grantees: 14
- Total kW installed: 411kW

2020-2021

- Total Grant Funding: \$1,537,120
- Total # of Grantees: 12
- Total kW installed: 528kW

2021-2022

- Total Grant Funding: \$356,336
- Total # of Grantees: 5
- Total kW installed: 120kW

2022-2023

- Total Grant Funding: \$3,200,000
- Total # of Grantees: 27
- Total kW installed: 750kW

I M P A C T S



TSAF Grantees Leading in Renewable Energy



CREATING TRIBAL ENERGY LEADERS

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Community and Fellowship

TSAF strives to promote a strong and interconnected community of Tribal Energy leaders. Our fellowship allows for tribal members leading energy initiatives access to financial support and a network of mentors and industry leaders.

Education and Experiential Learning

TSAF provides accessible education support through scholarship funding, internships, and an innovative online 8 week training program through our Summer Associates Program.



Challenges and Opportunities of a Just Transition

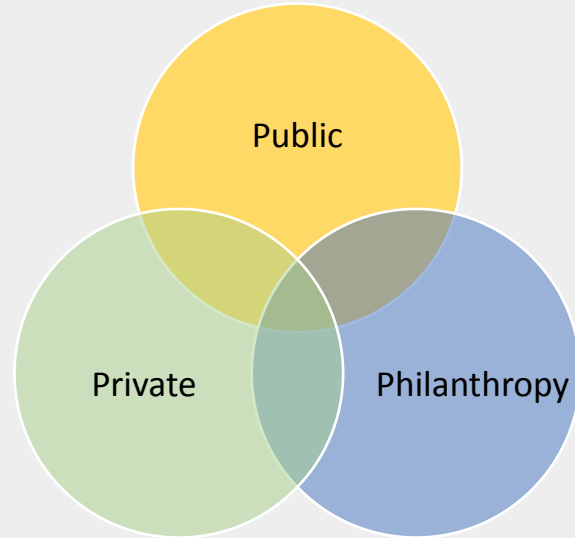
Challenges

- Lack of resources and funding (capital, experts, workforce)
- Unfavorable net metering, cumbersome interconnection policies
- Lack of collaboration
- Rural areas
- Federal and State Policies
- Supply and Demand

Opportunities

- 16 Tribally-Owned Electric Utilities in the U.S. - replicable model of complete energy sovereignty
- Distributed solar policies enable benefits
- IRA and BIL Funding Opportunities
- Rising Costs of Traditional Energy Production (e.g. Fossil Fuels)

How do we fund this work?



Public Sector

- Local, state, and federal grants, as well as rebates and incentives, if applicable

Private Sector

- Corporate partnerships, CRA requirements, CSR, financial support, tax credits

Philanthropic Sector

- Contributions from institutions and individuals: time, talent, treasure, team/tribe

Funder role in a Just Transition

- Creating and building authentic partnerships and values-aligned investments with tribal communities and tribal-led organizations
- Shifting powers in the climate change movement by uplifting the voices in Indian Country while dismantling the inequities of the energy crisis, environmental and social justice issues
- Recognizing the importance of tribal sovereignty

Things you can do to support our work

- FOLLOW @tribalsolar and @gridtribalprogram on all social media platforms to like, share, and uplift the work and stories
- Visit tribalsolar.org to learn more about our grantees, and tribal energy leaders
- Visit gridalternatives.org/tribal-program to contact our tribal installation team

Q & A and Thank you!