

# Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy: Statewide Workshop Findings and Recommendations

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## I. Overview

In February 2026, the Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency and the Institute for Rural Collaboration convened two statewide workshops focused on strengthening public and stakeholder engagement for consideration of renewable energy, energy infrastructure, and large load facilities. The Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy workshops brought together energy stakeholders from across the state to build shared understanding, improve public engagement practices, and inform the outcomes of the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce (established by Executive Order 2025-13: *Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona*). The workshops were held February 9 in Phoenix and February 10 in Tucson and were co-designed and facilitated by Southwest Decision Resources.

This report summarizes the key insights, opportunities, and concerns raised by participants representing state and local government, Tribal Nations, nonprofit organizations, utilities, academia, community members, and energy developers. Discussions highlighted opportunities to support renewable energy development, the challenges communities face navigating complex siting and permitting processes, and the need for clearer communication, stronger collaboration, and more inclusive engagement practices.

Seven key recommendations emerged from the workshops. Some of these recommendations are applicable to communities (including local governments), some to developers, and some to the State of Arizona. We have noted the audiences to which each recommendation may apply.

### Recommendation for: Local Communities

- **Strengthen community-level planning:** Communities are better positioned when local energy priorities, development preferences, and engagement expectations are established before specific projects are proposed. Early, forward-looking planning can reduce uncertainty for both communities and developers and ensure development aligns with communities' interests. This planning might best be accomplished as part of a larger economic development planning process. Early, intentional, and transparent planning processes conversations can be used can help communities and project developers identify key elements such as preferred or unsuitable development areas, desired community benefits, zoning and land-use standards, and clearly defined stakeholder engagement processes. These planning efforts can also provide a forum to clarify a community's broader role in regional energy development, assess anticipated energy demands and needs, and evaluate whether distributed energy, energy efficiency, or energy conservation strategies could offset or reshape future development. The use of neutral facilitation and collaborative public engagement was recognized as critical to enabling inclusive and constructive dialogue within planning processes.

### Recommendation for: Local governments and energy project developers

- **Encourage meaningful public engagement processes:** Workshop participants noted that public engagement is often one-sided with little opportunity for meaningful input. Participants agreed that public engagement for energy and large-load developments

should focus on collaborative approaches featuring stakeholder assessments, meetings with small-group breakouts, and other strategies to foster meaningful input and robust dialogue. Ongoing education and knowledge-sharing across government agencies, developers, utilities, subject matter experts, and residents are essential to informed and constructive engagement. Participants identified transparency, knowledge building, information accessibility, and education as foundational elements of engagement processes.

#### **Recommendation for: Local governments and energy project developers**

- **Engage communities early:** For proposed energy and related initiatives, engagement with community stakeholders should begin early in a project lifecycle — ideally before a project site has been selected or, at a minimum, before final design has been completed. Participants emphasized the importance of identifying stakeholder interests, understanding community concerns, and evaluating the relative benefits and tradeoffs of different alternatives with community stakeholders during the project assessment phase. At the same time, participants noted that it would be helpful to provide information to enable communities to better understand the constraints faced by developers and what may or may not be feasible for a given project. Community stakeholders may include local governments, residents, business owners, stakeholder groups, and industry representatives, among others. Broadening participation and understanding at the outset can foster more flexible, context-sensitive, and durable solutions and can help identify modifications (e.g. combined use models such as agrivoltaics) that may be feasible for developers and better meet community needs. The use of neutral facilitation and collaborative public engagement was recognized as critical to enabling inclusive and constructive dialogue during project assessments.

#### **Recommendation for: Local governments, energy project developers, state government**

- **Prioritize early tribal consultation and engagement:** Where Tribal interests may be affected, Tribal Consultation and engagement must be treated as a distinct process embedded at the earliest stages of energy planning and project design. Early, meaningful partnerships support Tribal energy and economic priorities while strengthening long-term project outcomes. Engagement should occur before sites and project details are finalized, with opportunities for Tribal Nations to conduct site visits and provide input in advance of major decisions. Participants emphasized the need to respect Tribal sovereignty, data sovereignty, cultural resources, and traditional knowledge, and to ensure Tribal Consultation is separate from general public engagement.

#### **Recommendation for: Local governments and energy project developers**

- **Identify and seek alignment with community needs:** Energy planning and project development should prioritize meaningful local input and clearly articulate long-term community needs. Workshop discussions identified potential actions, policies, tools, and resources to clarify tradeoffs and ensure that economic, environmental, and social benefits are defined in partnership with affected communities. Tools such as Community Benefits

Agreements and Development Agreements may be helpful to identify community needs and ensure alignment in the context of consideration of renewable-energy or large-load projects.

#### **Recommendation for: Local governments and state government**

- **Develop clear expectations for public engagement:** Standardized and transparent public engagement expectations for energy production, transmission and large-load projects can improve consistency and accountability among project proponents, including local governments, developers, and utilities. Participants discussed the value of clear public engagement and disclosure standards, early notification requirements, and alignment with relevant federal interconnection standards. Creation of new standards should ideally be undertaken through a collaborative process that engages the full range of stakeholders to maximize alignment between the needs of communities, project developers, the state, and Tribal governments. The formation of advisory bodies representing counties, regions, and Tribal governments was also identified as a mechanism to strengthen coordination and ensure diverse perspectives are considered in energy and large-load planning decisions.

#### **Recommendation for: State government**

- **Build public engagement capacity through state-led and supported initiatives:** Proactive planning and meaningful engagement require resources and support at the local level for community leaders, developers, and the public. Participants identified opportunities for state-led and state-supported initiatives to strengthen engagement on energy projects, including a centralized clearinghouse of contacts, model agreements, community benefit frameworks, and development codes. Additional helpful resources include funding for neutral facilitation, and training in collaborative engagement practices.



*Blaise Caudill, Governor's Office of Resiliency, presenting the opening session at the Phoenix workshop.*

## II. Introduction

Arizona stands at a pivotal moment in its energy future, driven by population growth, increasing energy demand including from data centers and other large-load sources, and heightened national interest in renewable energy development. To help address challenges with this transition, Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs signed Executive Order 2025-13: *Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona*. This Executive Order established the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce, a cross-sector body charged with developing strategic energy policy recommendations and streamlining energy deployment.

In February 2026, the Governor's Office of Resiliency and the Institute for Rural Collaboration convened two statewide workshops focused on strengthening collaborative public engagement for consideration of renewable energy, energy infrastructure, and large-load facilities. The *Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy* workshops brought together energy stakeholders from across the state to build shared understanding, improve public engagement practices, and inform the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce (established by Executive Order 2025-13: *Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona*). The workshops were held February 9, 2026 in Phoenix and February 10, 2026 in Tucson were co-designed and facilitated by Southwest Decision Resources.

The following report provides a comprehensive summary of the two workshops, capturing the key themes, insights, and concerns raised by participants across state and local governments, Tribal Nations, local communities, nonprofits, utilities, academia, and energy developers. This report synthesizes the input received in the workshops regarding emerging opportunities for renewable energy development, the challenges communities face in navigating complex siting and permitting processes, and the need for clearer communication, stronger collaboration, and more inclusive public engagement practices.

The workshop discussions highlighted widespread interest in building shared understanding, improving coordination among stakeholders, and strengthening trust in decision-making processes—essential components for advancing Arizona's clean-energy future and achieving the goals of Governor Hobbs' Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce.

### **A. Our Changing Energy Landscape: Growth, Opportunity, and Rising Community Concerns**

Arizona's evolving energy landscape is marked by extraordinary opportunities and real challenges for Arizona communities. As Arizona continues to grow, remaining among the fastest-growing states in the nation, the demand for reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean energy has intensified. As Governor Hobbs has noted, Arizona's role as a major technology hub and investment magnet depends heavily on strengthening its energy capacity while recent delays in federal permitting for solar and wind projects could jeopardize over 151,000 energy-related jobs in Arizona and threaten \$104 billion in private investment, potentially raising energy costs for households statewide by 2035.

Arizona communities—including rural communities and Tribal Nations—are encountering a surge in proposed energy, transmission, and large-load projects. In some instances, this has caused residents and local governments to become wary of how large-scale energy infrastructure and other large developments could affect landscapes, livelihoods, and local governance. Such tensions are not unique to Arizona; they mirror national challenges where renewable energy and large-load development often outpace public understanding and stakeholder coordination. These dynamics can impede America's broader clean-energy transition and hinder economic growth in rural communities.

In this context, structured collaboration, early engagement, and transparent public processes are essential. These efforts help prevent conflict, build trust, and ensure that energy and large-load development better align with community interests while meeting statewide goals.

## B. Convening Partners

### Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency

Governor Hobbs established the Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency (OOR) to unite Arizona's water, land use, transportation, and energy policy under a single coordinated umbrella, providing leadership to address the state's growing climate and natural-resource challenges. Its overarching purpose is to confront the compounding threats posed by water scarcity, extreme heat, environmental degradation, and the broader impacts of the climate crisis. The Office works to bring state agencies, businesses, Tribal governments, underserved communities, and other partners together to develop solutions that strengthen economic opportunity and improve quality of life for all Arizonans.

The Office of Resiliency focuses on long-term prosperity by advancing policies and programs that support clean energy development, safeguard natural resources, and enhance community resilience and serves as a central coordinating body to ensure Arizona is prepared for both current and future climate-related challenges. Since its inception, the Office has secured significant federal funding and supported major clean-technology investments to help modernize Arizona's infrastructure and energy systems. Its work spans initiatives related to energy affordability, water protection, grid reliability, environmental health, and sustainable transportation.

### Executive Order 2025-13: Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona

Governor Katie Hobbs' Executive Order 2025-13, *Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona*, established the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce, a cross-sector body charged with developing strategic energy policy recommendations and streamlining energy deployment. The actions implemented by this Executive Order are essential to sustaining Arizona's economic trajectory, strengthening energy affordability, and accelerating renewable energy growth.

The Taskforce, staffed by the Governor's Office of Resiliency, is required to produce several detailed reports by March 1, 2026, including an Arizona energy strategy plan, a framework for accommodating large-load customers, and a strategic plan for generation and transmission

corridors across state lands. These directives guide the design and goals of the workshops co-hosted by the Governor's Office of Resiliency and the Institute for Rural Collaboration.

### **Institute for Rural Collaboration**

The Institute for Rural Collaboration (IRC) is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit dedicated to empowering rural communities by using collaborative learning, a facilitated, multi-stakeholder approach that emphasizes open communication, shared information, and collective deliberation. This method brings residents, government entities, developers, and other stakeholders together to discuss proposed projects in transparent, accessible, and equitable settings. It helps communities navigate complex decisions about renewable energy development—especially when proposals can become contentious.

IRC provides support to rural communities, helping them design participatory processes that lead to more constructive engagement, reduced conflict, and more informed community decision making. Its work reflects the understanding that rural regions are essential partners in statewide energy strategies, and that long-term success depends on building trust and strengthening local capacity to engage with energy developers and agencies.

### **Southwest Decision Resources**

Southwest Decision Resources (SDR) co-designed, organized and facilitated the workshops. SDR is an Arizona-based team of facilitation and collaboration professionals committed to informed and inclusive decision making on natural resource, community, and public policy issues. Through equitable engagement and clear collaborative processes, SDR helps partners achieve higher quality, more broadly supported and enduring solutions. SDR's work is centered around core areas of expertise that include design and facilitation of collaborative efforts, strategic planning and visioning, land and water management, climate adaptation, collaborative conservation and stewardship, urban planning, adaptive management, and mentoring and capacity building.

## **C. Collaborative Public Engagement**

The Institute for Rural Collaboration promotes and supports collaborative public engagement designed as a multi-stakeholder public process that is transparent, accessible, and equitable. This approach brings together community members, government agencies, developers, and other stakeholders to share information openly and discuss competing interests associated with renewable energy and other development projects.

In the context of energy development, collaborative public engagement provides a structured environment where participants can jointly evaluate proposals, clarify misconceptions, and work toward shared understanding. By supporting facilitated dialogue across diverse viewpoints, collaborative public engagement supports the navigation of complex siting and permitting issues, reducing conflict and supporting more informed and durable decisions about clean energy development. Collaborative public engagement approaches are used by Southwest Decision Resources and facilitators throughout the United States and internationally.

#### D. Engaging Arizona: Stakeholder Workshops

The February 2026 workshops were convened to strengthen dialogue and coordination across Arizona's energy landscape, with a particular focus on improving public engagement practices. Participants examined key opportunities and challenges associated with renewable energy, transmission infrastructure, and large-load development, and considered how engagement processes can better support informed, durable decision-making across diverse communities.

Using a collaborative learning framework, the workshops combined statewide context-setting with interactive discussion. Participants reviewed current energy trends, explored public engagement challenges arising in siting and permitting processes, and analyzed case studies highlighting effective engagement strategies. Small-group discussions created space for candid dialogue about local concerns, governance dynamics, and practical tools for improving communication and coordination.

In addition to generating input for state energy planning efforts, the workshops aimed to build shared understanding and strengthen relationships among stakeholders. By fostering constructive dialogue across sectors and communities, the convenings offer suggestions to shape future capacity-building efforts that will influence how Arizona approaches energy development in the years ahead.



*Jessica Western, Institute for Rural Collaboration, providing an overview of public engagement best practices at the Tucson workshop.*

### III. Workshop Findings and Recommendations

The Workshop Findings and Recommendations include:

- **Workshop Approach and Design** - An overview of the planning process, workshop objectives and agenda, and participants; and
- **Workshop Summary** - A synthesized summary of the key discussion themes, including challenges, best practices, and recommended actions that emerged from both workshops.

## A. Workshop Approach and Design

Planning for the workshops began in November 2025 through a partnership among the Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency, Institute for Rural Collaboration, and Southwest Decision Resources (the "Workshop Organizers"). Planning was informed by outreach to Arizona energy stakeholders, whose feedback helped shape both the agenda and the overarching purpose: to strengthen community and stakeholder engagement in renewable energy and broader energy infrastructure development across Arizona.

Grounded in Arizona's growing energy demand and evolving energy economy—and aligned with Executive Order 2025-13, *Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona*, as well as the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce—the workshops were designed around four core objectives:

- Learn about current initiatives, major projects, and emerging trends shaping Arizona's energy landscape.
- Share perspectives on the community impacts and benefits of energy development across the state.
- Identify approaches to support meaningful, early, and sustained stakeholder engagement.
- Highlight key needs, opportunities, and next steps to strengthen collaboration and coordination in advancing Arizona's energy economy.

To maximize participation from diverse audiences across the state, workshops were held in two locations and dates: Phoenix (February 9, 2026) and Tucson (February 10, 2026). Each workshop was held from 10AM and 3PM, including lunch, and followed a common agenda, structure, and framing to ensure comparable discussion and feedback across locations.

The workshops were designed to provide participants with an opportunity to explore Arizona's rapidly evolving energy landscape and discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with meeting the state's growing energy needs while building community trust, local ownership, and durable public support. Both workshops used facilitated plenary discussions, small-group breakouts, and structured reporting to capture participant insights and recommendations. Because the workshops followed the same design, the results offer a consistent basis for identifying recurring themes and areas of alignment. Agendas and venue information for the Phoenix and Tucson workshops can be found in Appendices B (Phoenix) and C (Tucson).

The workshops were widely advertised to Arizona energy stakeholders, and registration was open to all interested parties. Participants included leaders and practitioners from federal and state agencies, local and Tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, utilities, private developers, academic institutions, community groups, and others involved in renewable energy and large-load infrastructure initiatives. Fifty-one participants attended the Phoenix workshop, and 42 attended the Tucson workshop. Complete participant lists are provided in Appendices D (Phoenix) and E (Tucson).

## B. Workshop Summary

### Welcome and Workshop Overview

The workshops opened with welcoming remarks from Blaise Caudill (OOR) in Phoenix and Jeremiah Dean (OOR) in Tucson, who thanked participants for their time and engagement and described the critical energy related needs facing Arizona communities. Brian Kuehl (IRC) then provided additional context and outlined how the workshops and their anticipated outputs will link to Executive Order 2025-13, *Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona*, and the Energy Promise Taskforce (see Introduction for more background information about the workshop). Tahnee Robertson (SDR) concluded the opening session with an overview of the workshop objectives and agenda.



*Jeremiah Dean, Governor's Office of Resiliency, presenting the opening session at the Tucson workshop.*

### Setting the Stage

Mr. Caudill (Phoenix) and Mr. Dean (Tucson) presented an overview of the current landscape of energy development in Arizona, which included an overview of the Governor's Office of Resiliency and its role in guiding energy policy and implementation. Some key highlights from their presentation are summarized below.

- Governor Katie Hobbs announced the creation of the Office of Resiliency during the inaugural state of the state. The office unites water, land use, transportation, and energy policy under one umbrella.
- The Governor's Office of Resiliency includes three major functions, including: (a) operates as the state energy office, (b) stewards natural resources through policy analysis and advisory support, and (c) develops and implements climate resilience strategies and measures.
- Arizona must effectively plan for a rapidly transforming energy system and rising demand while navigating uncertainty. To address those challenges, Arizona will need to explore all elements of its energy portfolio (e.g. nuclear, hydropower, gas, wind, solar, coal, etc.).

- Several factors are impacting Arizona's energy systems, including population growth and demand, extreme heat, and changes in federal policies and priorities (e.g. H.R. 1 bill and U.S. Department of Interior permitting changes). The Governor is committed to removing barriers to enable future renewable energy development at the state level to help meet growing demand. The Governor is also invested in mitigating extreme heat impacts and maintaining a reliable energy grid.
- Renewable energy sources provide a relatively short implementation timeline and, therefore, will provide a critical path to meeting an increase in near-term energy demands.
- Energy affordability in Arizona will require addressing the inequalities in energy burden across communities.
- Executive Order 2025-13 was signed into law by Governor Hobbs to help address some of the critical issues facing Arizona. E.O. 2025-13 established the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce (Taskforce), delivers tools to advance energy affordability, assists Tribal energy enterprise, supports energy industries in Arizona, and reduces government costs.
- The Taskforce has been working for several months and is responsible for delivering a policy framework to facilitate large load customer growth while supporting affordability for communities, developing an Arizona Energy Strategic Plan to establish a framework to enable new energy generation, and creating a plan for strategic energy infrastructure project corridors on state lands. Taskforce outputs are expected to be released in early March.

Dr. Jessica Western (IRC) presented an overview of research examining the current state of community and stakeholder engagement in energy projects. Key highlights from her presentation are summarized below. Additional details about this research are presented in Appendix A.

- The Decide-Announce-Defend (DAD) approach has been prevalent in energy project development. The DAD approach suggests that stakeholder and community engagement occurs after a decision is made or a final outcome is communicated, which often leads to opposition and significant resource investment in addressing public concerns or backlash.
- The DAD approach is often not the most effective choice. Proactive, meaningful public engagement is viewed as the best practice to build social license and improve governance while often resulting in time and cost savings and more durable, long-lasting outcomes.
- "Meaningful Public Engagement" does not require resolving every community issue, but it does require making a genuine effort to engage in interactive dialogue and involve the public in decisions when appropriate. This approach is already codified in many instances of federal guidance, including from the Federal Highway Administration, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, and the Environmental Protection Agency.



*Jessica Western describing public engagement and energy at the Phoenix workshop.*

- Characteristics of meaningful public engagement include a public deliberation of interests, information, issues, and options, inclusive engagement, and the use of a neutral facilitator to guide discussions.
- Several best practices leading to meaningful engagement were suggested, including conducting stakeholder assessments or mapping, robust information sharing and joint learning, open and transparent communication, small-group discussions and other trust-building approaches.

The workshop presentation slides are provided in Appendix F. Questions raised by participants during the presentation and the responses provided are included in Appendix G.

## Energy Projects & Engagement in Arizona: Status, Trends, & Successes

In the morning session, workshop participants engaged in small-group discussions regarding energy development across Arizona. Participants provided their observations of energy and renewable energy development in Arizona, how that development is impacting and benefiting communities, and how those communities should be engaged in energy projects moving forward. This section integrates feedback from both workshops.

### Trends in the Arizona Energy Landscape

The following section synthesizes participant reflections on key trends shaping energy development and engagement in Arizona.

#### Renewable Energy Growth and Data Center Development

Participants described significant expansion in large-scale renewable energy development across Arizona. Utility-scale solar development remains strong and is increasingly paired with battery storage, while wind development continues in select regions. In some areas—such as portions of the Navajo Nation more than 14,000 acres are reportedly under development. Residential and small-scale solar paired with battery storage has also emerged as a reliable and increasingly common energy strategy.

This growth has heightened awareness of the need for expanded transmission capacity, new substations, and grid modernization. Participants emphasized the importance of long-term, cost-effective solutions to improve overall system efficiency while diversifying energy resources. Options discussed included additional wind, natural gas, nuclear, biomass, hydropower, microgrids, and other emerging technologies to ensure reliability and resilience.

Participants also noted that rising electricity demand from hyperscale data centers is accelerating development timelines and increasing the number of proposed facilities. In areas where data centers have already been constructed, communities are experiencing significant increases in load demand. Some communities reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume and scale of proposed projects.

## Policies, Regulations, and Incentives

Participants described a shifting and uncertain policy landscape at both the federal and state levels. Fluctuating or expiring federal and state incentives have created a sense of urgency to secure available tax credits, while also contributing to slowdowns in some residential, industrial, and small-scale commercial solar adoption. Sudden federal policy and funding changes—particularly those affecting Tribal communities—were cited as creating instability and complicating long-term planning.

At the state level, participants expressed concern around the energy regulatory environment and the level to which renewable energy development is supported by regulators. Several participants perceived that opportunities for residential and small-scale commercial generation have diminished. They also noted a disconnect between state-level energy policymaking and the nuanced realities facing local communities, as well as a desire for more clarity regarding Arizona's long-term energy goals and strategy.

At the municipal level, regulatory approaches were often described as inconsistent. While some cities have adopted ordinances addressing energy development, comprehensive policies remain rare, and other municipalities offer little guidance. This patchwork framework is creating uncertainty and stress for community members who anticipate near-term project proposals.

Finally, participants noted that many utility-scale projects are sited on Bureau of Land Management, state trust, and other public lands, raising new land-use tensions. Concerns were expressed about cumulative environmental impacts and the conversion of multiple-use landscapes to large-scale, single-purpose energy production.

## Community Impacts and Benefits

Various benefits and impacts to communities often accompany energy development. Although, participants emphasized that many of the potential benefits had not been fully identified or realized. Below are potential benefits and impacts to local communities identified at the workshop.

### Economic Benefits

Participants discussed several potential economic benefits associated with energy development. These included possible increases in property tax revenue for local jurisdictions and broader regional economic development tied to data centers and related supporting industries.

Participants also noted that renewable energy is often among the lowest-cost sources of new electricity generation. In this context, energy development may provide relatively inexpensive renewable power for utilities and their customers, with potential implications for long-term energy affordability.

### Community and Infrastructure Benefits

Participants identified a variety of community and infrastructure focused benefits associated with energy development. These included the creation of construction jobs, including long-term positions for facility operations and temporary economic boosts to local communities during construction.

Energy development can also lead to increased workforce training, professional certifications, and the creation of new career pathways. Participants noted potential improvements in community independence and resilience through microgrids, battery storage, distributed solar, and the electrification of homes or communities that previously lacked access.

Additional benefits discussed included conservation properties and dual-use solar approaches such as agrivoltaics, residential rebate programs that support energy efficiency improvements. Some participants also mentioned potential community benefit contributions from developers, such as funding for fire departments, government vehicles, or other local services.

#### Environmental and Land Use Concerns

Participants identified a range of environmental and land use considerations associated with large-scale energy development. These included the loss of wildlife habitat, disruption of migration corridors, reduced access to hunting and recreation areas, and limitations on the use of public lands. Participants also noted changes to viewsheds and the broader character of local landscapes.

Additional topics raised during the discussion included water use in arid regions, potential air quality impacts, questions regarding electromagnetic field exposure, and safety risks related to battery storage, including fire hazards. Participants observed that cumulative regional impacts are not always fully assessed and that the combined effects of multiple projects may not yet be well understood.

Participants also discussed Tribal Consultation processes, noting concerns that decisions are sometimes made or substantially advanced before Tribes are informed, meaningfully engaged, or consulted with on a formal Government-to-Government basis, with potential negative implications for cultural resources, sacred sites, and Tribal sovereignty.

#### Economic and Social Concerns

Participants highlighted a range of economic and social concerns related to energy development. Some noted that state incentives could reduce local tax bases. In some cases, there is not a clear understanding among members of the public about whether projects benefit their communities or how any funds are returned to residents.

Questions were raised about whether the resources invested in energy projects will result in long-term community benefits, including uncertainty about where the energy produced will be used and whether local communities will have access to it.

Other concerns included housing shortages caused by temporary worker influxes—sometimes numbering 400–500 workers in small towns—and rising electricity rates that may sometimes occur without broad public knowledge or input. Participants also discussed how the expiration or removal of solar incentives could reduce energy affordability and highlighted disparities in access to renewable energy benefits, particularly for low-income or underprivileged communities. Additionally, participants noted that regulations and planning frameworks are often insufficient to manage energy projects effectively.

## Community Perspectives Towards Energy Development

Participants suggested a considerable variability in Arizona communities' support for or opposition to energy projects. Understanding these sentiments is critical for identifying barriers to engagement, anticipating conflicts, and designing strategies that reflect local priorities.

### Regional and Cultural Variation

Support and opposition to energy projects differ by geography and local project history. Communities with a long-standing renewable energy presence generally exhibit less resistance, whereas rural areas often resist or are highly skeptical of projects that primarily serve urban load centers. Urban communities, by contrast, tend to show higher levels of engagement in project discussions.

### Areas of Support

Participants highlighted areas that tend to show strong support for renewable energy, for instance in climate-conscious communities such as Flagstaff and in regions with a long history of renewable project siting, including parts of southern Arizona. Even where support is less clear, there is often a recognition of the positive impacts of clean energy, though individuals may be unclear about the direct benefits to the community. Workforce development and youth opportunities were noted as motivating factors for driving support for energy developments. Trusted local messengers, such as firefighters, farmers, and community leaders, were identified as important in reducing fear, increasing education, and building community acceptance.

### Opposition and Skepticism

Participants identified several sources of opposition and skepticism toward energy development across Arizona communities. "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) concerns were reported for solar, wind, gas, and transmission projects, with grassroots opposition sometimes growing even when broader community sentiment is neutral or supportive. Communities new to renewable development tended to express stronger resistance, often linked to distrust of out-of-state developers and utilities.

Other concerns centered on perceptions that energy projects may primarily benefit distant urban areas while imposing costs on local communities and landscapes. Questions about reliability, affordability, and grid stability were frequently raised, alongside frustration with engagement processes perceived as superficial or "check-the-box" efforts. Participants also noted that misinformation and online polarization can reinforce skepticism.

Participants emphasized that Tribal communities are often inadequately consulted or engaged in energy development projects. Policy shifts and federal funding cuts disproportionately affect Tribes, underscoring the need for meaningful, early consultation that respects Tribal sovereignty and cultural resources.

Participants also noted that internal governmental political and capacity challenges can affect project timelines and limit the effectiveness of public engagement. These challenges influence

both the pace of project approval and the quality of community involvement, independent of broader community sentiment.

Participants highlighted the complex trade-offs of energy development: while projects can provide jobs and economic opportunities, they may also raise concerns about land use, community impacts, and long-term benefits. Reactive planning is increasingly common to meet hyperscale energy demand, and limited public understanding of grid operations, energy economics, and project benefits can hinder meaningful participation. Developers, in turn, may have challenges understanding which locations and project features are most likely to be accepted by a given community and would benefit by clearer guidance and industry standards.

### *Community Roles in Energy Projects*

Participants identified potential roles for communities, local governments, and project developers in shaping energy projects and their outcomes, which are summarized below.

#### *Community Members*

- Identify collective goals and values.
- Advocate for specific needs, including environmental interests, economic concerns and goals, and long-term or end-of-contract actions required from developers.
- Stay informed about project benefits and costs.
- Actively engage with developers and participate (as appropriate) in decision-making processes that directly influence their communities.
- Voice support or opposition to projects.
- Engage the Arizona Corporation Commission through their policymaking process.
- Receive benefits proportionate to the impacts absorbed by the community.

#### *Local Governments*

- Ensure supply chains remain local where possible.
- Participate in planning processes and develop clear, accessible zoning and land-use rules.
- Provide technical expertise in engineering, design, and planning while also listening to community input.
- Determine how communities will enhance their power grids and utilize funds from developers prior to project proposals.

#### *Project Developers*

- Engage with local governments and key stakeholders.
- Approach communities with the intention of learning and understanding local priorities.
- Collaborate with state agencies to create suitable conditions for public engagement and encourage active participation.



*Table discussions identifying engagement best practice, challenges and recommendations at the Tucson workshop.*

## Engagement Best Practices and Moving Forward

In the afternoon session, workshop participants heard a presentation on community and public engagement best practices and engaged in small groups to discuss engagement best practices and tools, practices, and resources needed to strengthen engagement moving forward. This section integrates feedback from both workshops.

### Engagement Best Practices: Presentation

In her second presentation, Dr. Western presented an overview of her experiences and research examining best practices related to community and stakeholder engagement in energy projects. Key highlights from her presentation are summarized below. Additional details about this research are presented in Appendix A.

- Two methods for meaningful public engagement include Collaborative Learning and Consensus Building.
- Collaborative Learning includes engagement with community members and is often characterized by an exchange of interests, issues, and options. This method includes an ongoing feedback loop between stakeholders, developers, and the public.
- Consensus Building typically includes engagement with stakeholder representatives who use interests as a baseline to negotiate tradeoffs and an agreement on a shared decision.

- Meaningful public engagement offers a different approach to Decide-Announce-Defend (DAD) and typically includes dialogue-based engagements such as breakout groups and plenary discussions.
- Several resources to support engagement best practices, including organizations focused on facilitation, collaborative process design, and training are available in Arizona.
- Although providing opportunities for meaningful public engagement can require an upfront cost investment, it often results in long-term time and cost savings to the project proponent. It also often helps build trust, laying the groundwork for community support and durable outcomes.
- Research indicates a growing need for more meaningful engagement on clean energy projects.

The workshop presentation slides are provided in Appendix F. Questions raised by participants during the presentation and the responses provided are included in Appendix G.

### **Engagement Best Practices: Small Group Discussion**

Participants identified several practices that can help communities feel informed, respected, and actively involved in energy development projects.

#### *Community and Stakeholder Engagement Process*

It was consistently suggested that building trust between government, developers, and the public is a key component of energy development in Arizona. Trust-building is one important outcome of a strong engagement process that is established through transparency and accountability and begins with listening to and understanding community members.

Participants emphasized that effective engagement in energy projects requires a thoughtful, multi-layered approach that reaches both broad and local (e.g. school districts, neighborhoods, etc.) audiences. Engagement should extend well beyond the most common stakeholders, encompassing cities, school districts, neighborhoods, and other existing community networks. Leveraging meetings that already occur within communities can help connect with residents in familiar, comfortable settings.

Early and ongoing communication is essential. Participants recommended beginning to identify community interests and concerns by engaging community members and distributing stakeholder surveys as soon as a project is planned. It was also noted that clearly communicating the engagement process and providing information about the anticipated decision points at the beginning of a project is important. Trusted local contacts—including subject-matter experts, community “champions,” and other respected voices—can play a central role in organizing and leading engagement efforts, helping to build credibility and trust.

Participants suggested working with key stakeholders and partners during the design phase of a project as well as in energy planning efforts broader than single projects. It was suggested to start by casting a wide net while identifying stakeholders and beginning with broad, diverse engagement. Consultation with specific stakeholders, such as the State Historic Preservation Office, Tribes, and ranchers should occur early in the process. Tribal engagement, in particular, was noted as needing to be separate from general public engagement, with opportunities for

Tribes to visit project sites and provide input before plans advance. Participants also mentioned that continuing to be involved in projects after the planning phase and learning about operation and maintenance elements would increase understanding and support of projects.

Participants recommended holding meetings that encourage low-stress, calm, and productive dialogue, ensuring that individuals with diverse perspectives can be heard. To encourage inclusive engagement, diverse engagement approaches can be used, such as holding events at different times of the day, in different locations, offering virtual and in-person engagements, and offering multi-lingual options. Efforts should be made to balance participation so that vocal individuals and groups do not dominate discussions, and that communication is “two-way” (i.e., decision makers and community members each listen and talk to each other, rather than decision makers simply informing the public). Engagement should be facilitated by a neutral entity whenever possible, and clear, timely communication should follow each meeting to explain how input was used and what decisions were made, while providing consistent updates of project timelines and progress toward project milestones. Information should be distributed well in advance of engagements, and follow-up communication should be sent indicating outputs and decisions.

Finally, participants highlighted the importance of transparency and identifying tangible benefits for the community. This may include the use of community benefits or development agreements and taking early, deliberate steps to build relationships and earn trust before controversies arise.

#### Education and Information Sharing

Participants emphasized that effective education and information sharing are essential to meaningful community engagement in energy projects. Honesty and transparency were consistently cited as important factors in the process, as well as ensuring that all stakeholders have access to accurate and timely information. It was noted that communication should avoid technical jargon to ensure accessibility for all residents.

Participants noted a range of topics that educational efforts should cover, including foundational information about renewable energy or the energy source being considered, regional transmission systems, connections between federal, state, and Arizona Corporation Commission policies and local energy affordability, and how project options may be feasible or constrained. For each proposed project, communities should be informed about timelines, milestones, potential benefits, and potential impacts on land use, energy costs, and anticipated water resource use. It was noted that providing this information is important to equip residents with the ability to respond to misinformation.

Legal pathways for developing utility-scale projects, particularly those outside established regulatory frameworks, should also be clearly explained. Participants highlighted the importance of communicating options for community-based solar or aggregated residential purchasing as potential energy sources. They mentioned that local legal counsel could be engaged to build knowledge around these issues.

When engaging stakeholders and communities, a variety of materials and methods should be employed to reach diverse audiences. Written materials should be available in multiple languages to ensure accessibility and multiple communication methods should be used to ensure broad

understanding and participation. Digital tools such as QR codes and dedicated websites can make project information more accessible. The local media can also help distribute information.

Experiential and interactive approaches—such as storytelling, traveling art exhibits, science fairs, and site visits—were suggested to engage communities more deeply. Including subject matter experts and local leaders in events can also help reinforce credibility in a project or energy project.

Participants also recommended building developer capacity and providing guidance to the energy industry about public and stakeholder engagement processes through formal procedural guidance, education, and access to resources (e.g. facilitators). It was suggested that developers should be encouraged to appropriately engage communities before moving quickly with project development. Early and honest communications from developers, community leaders, and utility companies will help build necessary trust from community members.

### **Moving Forward**

Workshop participants identified a range of recommended actions, policies, tools, and resources that could be used to strengthen community trust and participation and improve energy development outcomes. These recommendations centered around identifying local benefits and impacts, creating community-level plans and regulations, broadening the range of options considered, encouraging collaborative learning, and establishing community engagement requirements for developers and utility companies. Participants also identified actions the Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency can take to support these recommendations.

Participants frequently suggested that energy projects should ideally result in outcomes that benefit and support the local community. Local communities across the state benefit from and are impacted differently by energy projects, which not only contribute new potential energy sources but may also result in impacts to the environment and the community. It is important that community members identify and understand the benefits and impacts of projects. To help ensure successful energy projects, community members can take elevated roles and increase their influence in energy related decisions.

Specifically, participants recommended community members be involved in proactive community-scale economic development and energy plans separately from (and ideally prior to) individual project proposals. These plans would allow communities to establish development guidelines that reflect local priorities while encouraging public and stakeholder engagement before projects are proposed. The plans would identify community values and goals, designate areas where development is supported and describe mechanisms through which the community should benefit from projects (e.g., community benefit agreements). In addition, communities could adopt zoning and planning ordinances to guide future energy and development projects.

Transparency, knowledge building, and education were repeatedly highlighted as foundational for energy-related engagement across the state. Local governments and developers should seek to establish relationships with community members. Participants recommended expanding capacity building and education efforts for the general public, community leaders, developers, and other stakeholders. It was also suggested that neutral facilitators and engagement specialists should be engaged, as appropriate, to build additional capacity and enhance engagement. Participants

noted that engaging communities throughout the process -- not only at the beginning/initial approval phase, but at multiple milestones throughout-- communicating a timeline of key engagements and decision points would help improve transparency. Participants noted that increased information sharing and marketing will also increase transparency and trust.

Tribal Consultation and engagement was identified as an essential component of future energy planning. Participants recommended forming meaningful partnerships with Tribal governments to support their energy and economic goals, while recognizing issues related to Tribal sovereignty, data sovereignty, culture, and traditions.

Some suggested reconsidering the use of non-disclosure agreements, which can be a barrier to building public trust. There was also interest in making lesser-utilized energy strategies more accessible, including distributed and community solar, energy efficiency improvements (as an alternative to expanding generation), and resilience infrastructure such as cooling centers with battery backup.

Many participants emphasized prioritizing long-term sustainability over short-term growth. A central theme was ensuring that energy produced with new developments – including the associated economic benefits and supply chains – benefit communities and stakeholders in Arizona to the degree possible. Participants encouraged maximizing the combined benefits of different energy development approaches, such as integrating solar with shade structures, job creation, or agrivoltaics applications.

Some participants recommended the development of industry standards for information and public engagement. It was suggested that the Arizona Corporation Commission recognize relevant federal interconnection standards (e.g. (IEEE 2030.5, IEEE 1547), consider an approach to creating advisory bodies to represent counties, regional areas, and Tribal officials, and establish consistent standards for the types of information developers must share when proposing projects. In addition, the Arizona Corporation Commission policies could be changed to allow utilities to include energy conservation financing as part of their rate case. If this occurred, utilities add information about their conservation measures to consumers' energy bills and involve the community more meaningfully in their broader conservation strategies.

Some participants proposed additional requirements for developers, which may include public forums, accessible and understandable written materials, approval from local leadership, and/or letters of support from community members. Developers could provide a standard set of information about every project proposed, such as the energy that would be provided at the local scale, and life-cycle analyses that incorporate socioeconomic and environmental costs and benefits. In addition, participants stated that requiring developers to propose more than one option (e.g. different configurations for a facility and the land surrounding it) could be extremely helpful in encouraging community members to be solution oriented.

Finally, participants recommended that the State of Arizona provide greater technical assistance and resources. Ideas included establishing a centralized clearinghouse of contacts, agreements, community benefit examples, and model codes; offering an appeals process; funding neutral facilitation for public engagement; supporting training in facilitation and community engagement; and incentivizing or reducing barriers to private and residential ownership of power sources.



*Table discussions identifying engagement recommendations at the Phoenix workshop.*

## IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The *Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy* workshops were convened to strengthen collaborative public engagement around renewable energy, energy infrastructure, and large load facility development across Arizona. As communities face increasing energy demand and more complex siting decisions, the workshops created space for state and local governments, Tribal Nations, utilities, developers, nonprofit organizations, and community members to identify shared challenges and practical solutions. Across regions and sectors, participants emphasized that successful energy development in Arizona will depend not only on technical feasibility and economic opportunity, but also on transparent processes, inclusive engagement, and meaningful local influence.

Seven key recommendations emerged from the workshops. Some of these recommendations are applicable to communities (including local governments), some to developers, and some to the State of Arizona. We have noted the audiences to which each recommendation may apply.

### Recommendation for: Local Governments

- **Strengthen community-level planning:** Communities are better positioned when local energy priorities, development preferences, and engagement expectations are established before specific projects are proposed. Early, forward-looking planning can reduce

uncertainty for both communities and developers and ensure development aligns with communities' interests. This planning might best be accomplished as part of a larger economic development planning process. Early, intentional, and transparent planning processes conversations can be used can help communities and project developers identify key elements such as preferred or unsuitable development areas, desired community benefits, zoning and land-use standards, and clearly defined stakeholder engagement processes. These planning efforts can also provide a forum to clarify a community's broader role in regional energy development, assess anticipated energy demands and needs, and evaluate whether distributed energy, energy efficiency, or energy conservation strategies could offset or reshape future development. The use of neutral facilitation and collaborative public engagement was recognized as critical to enabling inclusive and constructive dialogue within planning processes.

#### **Recommendation for: Local governments and energy project developers**

- **Encourage meaningful public engagement processes:** Workshop participants noted that public engagement is often one-sided with little opportunity for meaningful input. Participants agreed that public engagement for energy and large-load developments should focus on collaborative approaches featuring stakeholder assessments, meetings with small-group breakouts, and other strategies to foster meaningful input and robust dialogue. Ongoing education and knowledge-sharing across government agencies, developers, utilities, subject matter experts, and residents are essential to informed and constructive engagement. Participants identified transparency, knowledge building, information accessibility, and education as foundational elements of engagement processes.

#### **Recommendation for: Local governments and energy project developers**

- **Engage communities early:** For proposed energy and related initiatives, engagement with community stakeholders should begin early in a project lifecycle — ideally before a project site has been selected or, at a minimum, before final design has been completed. Participants emphasized the importance of identifying stakeholder interests, understanding community concerns, and evaluating the relative benefits and tradeoffs of different alternatives with community stakeholders during the project assessment phase. At the same time, participants noted that it would be helpful to provide information to enable communities to better understand the constraints faced by developers and what may or may not be feasible for a given project. Community stakeholders may include local governments, residents, business owners, stakeholder groups, and industry representatives, among others. Broadening participation and understanding at the outset can foster more flexible, context-sensitive, and durable solutions and can help identify modifications (e.g. combined use models such as agrivoltaics) that may be feasible for developers and better meet community needs. The use of neutral facilitation and collaborative public engagement was recognized as critical to enabling inclusive and constructive dialogue during project assessments.

### **Recommendation for: Local governments, energy project developers, state government**

- **Prioritize early tribal consultation and engagement:** Where Tribal interests may be affected, Tribal Consultation and engagement must be treated as a distinct process embedded at the earliest stages of energy planning and project design. Early, meaningful partnerships support Tribal energy and economic priorities while strengthening long-term project outcomes. Engagement should occur before sites and project details are finalized, with opportunities for Tribal Nations to conduct site visits and provide input in advance of major decisions. Participants emphasized the need to respect Tribal sovereignty, data sovereignty, cultural resources, and traditional knowledge, and to ensure Tribal Consultation is separate from general public engagement.

### **Recommendation for: Local governments and energy project developers**

- **Identify and seek alignment with community needs:** Energy planning and project development should prioritize meaningful local input and clearly articulate long-term community needs. Workshop discussions identified potential actions, policies, tools, and resources to clarify tradeoffs and ensure that economic, environmental, and social benefits are defined in partnership with affected communities. Tools such as Community Benefits Agreements and Development Agreements may be helpful to identify community needs and ensure alignment in the context of consideration of renewable-energy or large-load projects.

### **Recommendation for: Local governments and state government**

- **Develop clear expectations for public engagement:** Standardized and transparent public engagement expectations for energy production, transmission and large-load projects can improve consistency and accountability among project proponents, including local governments, developers, and utilities. Participants discussed the value of clear public engagement and disclosure standards, early notification requirements, and alignment with relevant federal interconnection standards. Creation of new standards should ideally be undertaken through a collaborative process that engages the full range of stakeholders to maximize alignment between the needs of communities, project developers, the state, and Tribal governments. The formation of advisory bodies representing counties, regions, and Tribal governments was also identified as a mechanism to strengthen coordination and ensure diverse perspectives are considered in energy and large-load planning decisions.

### **Recommendation for: State government**

- **Build public engagement capacity through state-led and supported initiatives:** Proactive planning and meaningful engagement require resources and support at the local level for community leaders, developers, and the public. Participants identified opportunities for state-led and state-supported initiatives to strengthen engagement on energy projects, including a centralized clearinghouse of contacts, model agreements, community benefit frameworks, and development codes. Additional helpful resources include funding for neutral facilitation, and training in collaborative engagement practices.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Engagement Best Practice Research

In the workshops participants discussed best practices and methods to apply them. Two documents published by the Institute for Rural Collaboration (IRC) were provided as reference.

The first “Renewable Energy and Public Engagement: Getting Away from DAD” (<https://www.ruralcollaboration.org/services-4>) describes the findings from the social sciences literature regarding public engagement strategies related to renewable energy in the last ten years. One finding was that the most prevalent methodology used was Decide-Announce-Defend (or DAD), a term that originated in the 1980s for top-down public planning and decision making. Using this methodology a developer announces a decision that has already been made, which is then presented to the public, often requiring a defense that may include legal actions. The second was that the overwhelming majority of articles recommended using more meaningful, deliberative forms of public engagement. IRC describes the best practices in this document published by a number of national and international organizations.

In the second document “Applying Best Practices for Meaningful Public Engagement for Clean Energy” (<https://www.ruralcollaboration.org/services-4>), IRC discusses best practices and methods to apply them. The best practices discussed are from the U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory (Ross and Day, 2022), the Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy (Susser et al. 2024), The Nature Conservancy (Markkanen et al., 2024) and the U.K. based REGEN (Windermere and Hayes, 2025). (See Table 1).

The best practices recommended by the four institutions (see Table 1) largely overlap. However, applying them varies depending on factors such as geography, demographics, politics, economics, and local attitudes. These best practices do not address how to apply them -- e.g. when to use stakeholder representatives versus open, public processes, appropriate information-sharing methods, or the value of breakout groups. These elements add another layer of complexity—one that many governments and corporations either lack familiarity with or view as too complicated, leading them to forgo more collaborative public engagement methods. To fill this gap, in this document IRC outlined two public engagement methods and steps to apply them.

Table 1 provides an overview of the best practices described by several institutions, demonstrating the agreement of practices to use.

**Table 1: Overview of Best Practices**

|                                              | <b>REGEN</b><br>(British Non-profit)                                                                 | <b>IEECC</b><br>(Institute for European Energy<br>and Climate Policy)                  | <b>NREL</b><br>(National Renewable<br>Energy Laboratory)                                      | <b>TNC</b><br>(The Nature Conservancy)                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Engagement Approach</b>                   | Be prepared with knowledge about the site, the proposal(s) and the local content                     | Have a defined budget: weigh early-stage engagement vs. costs of avoiding it.          | Be humble and authentic: be straightforward, lose the titles, acknowledge local expertise.    | Begin at the beginning i.e. in advance of project launch.                                                                                                              |
| <b>Stakeholder Assessment and/or Mapping</b> | Engage early with all stakeholders, including hard to reach residents and opposition groups.         | Be inclusive, also of hard-to-reach groups. Involve the public early and continuously. | Build an understanding of opinions, community history and context and views on collaboration. | Map and involve all stakeholder groups and their interests, including marginalized segments. Understand and respect the local context, characteristics and priorities. |
| <b>Connecting to the Community</b>           | Ensure communities feel engaged and heard.                                                           | Enable the public to be involved in decision-making.                                   | Meet the community where they are, make it easy to participate.                               | Employ local liaisons and experts, e.g. facilitator.                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Information and Learning</b>              | Be upfront about challenges and trade-offs while emphasizing the long-term benefits for communities. | Establish a process where information is shared openly.                                |                                                                                               | Keep public informed throughout project lifecycle.                                                                                                                     |

|                                                                                          | <b>REGEN</b><br>(British Non-profit)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>IEECC</b><br>(Institute for European Energy<br>and Climate Policy)                                                                                  | <b>NREL</b><br>(National Renewable<br>Energy Laboratory)       | <b>TNC</b><br>(The Nature Conservancy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Full, Open and<br/>           Transparent<br/>           Exchange</b>                 | Understand objections.<br>Acknowledge Concerns.<br>Engage and communicate<br>Proactively. Build trust<br>through transparency. Be<br>prepared with clear, fact-<br>based responses. Use<br>trusted, independent<br>sources. Make information<br>easy to understand. | Create transparent process<br>to trust in and between<br>different stakeholders<br>through an inclusive, fair,<br>transparent and equitable<br>process | Democratize participation,<br>ensure all have equal<br>access. | Avoid process fatigue and<br>focus on quality. Create a<br>well-designed process that<br>maximizes public's time<br>and energy with quality<br>information sharing. Ensure<br>a fair process that allows<br>residents<br>to influence the<br>development's design and<br>operation. |
| <b>Methods</b>                                                                           | Use different methods, e.g.<br>collaborative mapping,<br>design workshops,<br>simulations.                                                                                                                                                                          | Engagement process aim<br>should be to maximize<br>benefits for public.                                                                                |                                                                | Use a variety of<br>engagement methods incl.<br>e.g. GIS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Create Trust with the<br/>           Public through<br/>           Accountability</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Explain how the results of<br>the engagement process<br>influenced the design and<br>operation of project. Best<br>done continuously over<br>time.     |                                                                | For best results, use a co-<br>design approach where<br>decisions are receptive to<br>community feedback.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Community Benefits</b>                                                                | Maximize the impact of<br>community benefits,<br>consider shared ownership,<br>Community Benefits<br>Agreement or Development<br>Agreement                                                                                                                          | Create local and regional<br>added value during<br>construction phase and<br>long-term e.g. through<br>employment or community<br>funds.               |                                                                | Equity considerations and<br>benefit sharing<br>arrangements influence<br>how communities perceive<br>and handle the project's<br>impacts.                                                                                                                                          |

## Appendix B: Workshop Agenda – Phoenix (February 9, 2026)



### Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy

**Monday, February 9, 2026 | 10:00am - 3:00pm**

Arizona Commerce Authority (100 N. 7th Ave., Suite 400, Phoenix)

*This workshop will cover:*

- The current landscape of stakeholder and public engagement for large-load energy infrastructure, emerging technologies, and renewable energy development
- Effective approaches that support meaningful engagement
- Opportunities to strengthen early engagement and build shared understanding while addressing critical community interests, such as energy affordability
- Key needs, opportunities, and next steps to enhance future stakeholder and public engagement on energy initiatives

*Pre-workshop suggested reading:*

- Renewable Energy and Public Engagement: Getting Away from DAD
- Empowering Communities: Engagement in Renewable Energy Projects
- RMI Community Benefits in Energy Projects

| Agenda  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:00am | <b>Welcome, Workshop Overview and Introductions</b><br><br><i>Welcome - Blaise Caudill, Governor's Office of Resiliency and Brian Kuehl, Institute for Rural Collaboration</i><br><br><i>Introductions and Agenda Review - Tahnee Robertson, Southwest Decision Resources</i>                                                                                                                                                       |
| 10:20   | <b>Setting the Stage</b><br><br><i>Present a brief overview on the current landscape of energy development in Arizona, including prevailing engagement practices, approaches, and challenges.</i><br><br><i>Overview of energy development in Arizona - Blaise Caudill, Governor's Office of Resiliency</i><br><br><i>Current state of engagement in energy projects - Jessica Western, Institute for Rural Collaboration (IRC)</i> |
| 10:45   | <b>Energy Projects &amp; Engagement in Arizona: Status, Trends, &amp; Successes</b><br><br><i>In small groups, discuss experiences with engagement around energy projects in Arizona, including what is working well, key challenges, and observed or anticipated trends.</i>                                                                                                                                                       |
| 12:00pm | <b>Networking Lunch</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1:00pm</b> | <p><b>Engagement Best Practices</b><br/> <i>Present an overview of engagement best practices and, in small groups, discuss engagement best practices while reflecting on the tools, practices, and resources needed to strengthen engagement moving forward.</i></p> <p><b>Overview of engagement best practices - Jessica Western, IRC</b></p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> Tools, practices, and resources needed to strengthen engagement</p> |
| <b>2:00</b>   | <p><b>Moving Forward</b><br/> <i>Discuss recommendations for a path forward to strengthen engagement in Arizona energy projects.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>2:40</b>   | <p><b>Wrap-up</b><br/> <i>Reflect on key takeaways and identify next steps.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>3:00pm</b> | <b>Adjourn</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Relevant Links** (hold camera to view QR code, then click link that appears)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>State of Arizona, Executive Order 2025-13:<br/>Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona</b></p>                 | <p><b>Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency</b><br/> <a href="http://www.resilient.az.gov">www.resilient.az.gov</a></p>         |
| <p><b>Renewable Energy and Public Engagement:<br/>Getting Away from Decide Announce Defend (DAD)</b></p>                                  | <p><b>Institute for Rural Collaboration</b><br/> <a href="http://www.ruralcollaboration.org">www.ruralcollaboration.org</a></p>  |
| <p><b>How to Get Away from Decide Announce Defend:<br/>Applying Best Practices for Meaningful Public Engagement for Clean Energy</b></p>  | <p><b>Southwest Decision Resources</b><br/> <a href="http://www.swdresources.com">www.swdresources.com</a></p>                   |

## Appendix C: Workshop Agenda - Tucson (February 10, 2026)



### Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy

**Tuesday, February 10, 2026 | 10:00am - 3:00pm**

Donna R. Liggins Center (2160 N. 6th Ave, Tucson)

*This workshop will cover:*

- The current landscape of stakeholder and public engagement for large-load energy infrastructure, emerging technologies, and renewable energy development
- Effective approaches that support meaningful engagement
- Opportunities to strengthen early engagement and build shared understanding while addressing critical community interests, such as energy affordability
- Key needs, opportunities, and next steps to enhance future stakeholder and public engagement on energy initiatives

*Pre-workshop reading:*

- Renewable Energy and Public Engagement: Getting Away from DAD
- Empowering Communities: Engagement in Renewable Energy Projects
- RMI Community Benefits in Energy Projects

| Agenda  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:00am | <b>Welcome, Workshop Overview and Introductions</b><br><i>Welcome - Jeremiah Dean, Governor's Office of Resiliency, and Brian Kuehl, Institute for Rural Collaboration</i><br><i>Introductions and Agenda Review - Tahnee Robertson, Southwest Decision Resources</i>                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10:20   | <b>Setting the Stage</b><br><i>Present a brief overview on the current landscape of energy development in Arizona, including prevailing engagement practices, approaches, and challenges.</i><br><i>Overview of energy development in Arizona - Jeremiah Dean, Governor's Office of Resiliency</i><br><i>Current state of engagement in energy projects - Jessica Western, Institute for Rural Collaboration (IRC)</i> |
| 10:45   | <b>Energy Projects &amp; Engagement in Arizona: Status, Trends, &amp; Successes</b><br><i>In small groups, discuss experiences with engagement around energy projects in Arizona, including what is working well, key challenges, and observed or anticipated trends.</i>                                                                                                                                              |
| 12:00pm | <b>Networking Lunch</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1:00pm</b> | <p><b>Engagement Best Practices</b><br/> <i>Present an overview of engagement best practices and, in small groups, discuss engagement best practices while reflecting on the tools, practices, and resources needed to strengthen engagement moving forward.</i></p> <p><b>Overview of engagement best practices - Jessica Western, IRC</b></p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> Tools, practices, and resources needed to strengthen engagement</p> |
| <b>2:00</b>   | <p><b>Moving Forward</b><br/> <i>Discuss recommendations for a path forward to strengthen engagement in Arizona energy projects.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>2:40</b>   | <p><b>Wrap-up</b><br/> <i>Reflect on key takeaways and clarify next steps.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>3:00pm</b> | <b>Adjourn</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Relevant Links** (hold camera to view QR code, then click link that appears)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>State of Arizona, Executive Order 2025-13:<br/> Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona</p>                 | <p>Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency<br/> <a href="http://www.resilient.az.gov">www.resilient.az.gov</a></p>         |
| <p>Renewable Energy and Public Engagement:<br/> Getting Away from Decide Announce Defend (DAD)</p>                                  | <p>Institute for Rural Collaboration<br/> <a href="http://www.ruralcollaboration.org">www.ruralcollaboration.org</a></p>  |
| <p>How to Get Away from Decide Announce Defend:<br/> Applying Best Practices for Meaningful Public Engagement for Clean Energy</p>  | <p>Southwest Decision Resources<br/> <a href="http://www.swdresources.com">www.swdresources.com</a></p>                   |

## Appendix D: Participants – Phoenix (February 9, 2026)

| Participants           |                                                     |                                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Anthony Cadorin        | Navajo Tribal Utility Authority                     | Deputy General Manager, Generation    |
| Ashley Busada          | First Solar                                         | Sr Manager, Strategic Partnerships    |
| Carlos Aguiar          | City of Phoenix                                     |                                       |
| Caroline Klebacha      | Arizona State Historic Preservation Office          | Archaeology Compliance Specialist     |
| Casey Ratlief          | Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association |                                       |
| Chris Pasterz          | Navajo County                                       | Economic Development Director         |
| Cindy Freeman          | Southwestern Power Group                            | Director of Environmental Permitting  |
| Cody Cooper            | Navajo County                                       | Planning Manager                      |
| Colin Diaz             | Chambers for Innovation and Clean Energy            | Western Regional Director             |
| Danae Presler          | City of Flagstaff                                   | Climate Program Manager               |
| Dara Marks Marino      | Hopi Utilities Corporation                          | Grants & Project Coordinator          |
| Darren Coldwell        | Town of Payson                                      | Town Manager                          |
| Dean Miller            | Lux Consulting, LLC                                 |                                       |
| Dean Simms-Elias       | Plug and Play Tech Center                           | Program Manager                       |
| Don Martin             | Mohave County                                       | District 4 County Supervisor          |
| Edwin Hernandez-Vargas | City of Goodyear                                    | Chief Government Affairs Officer      |
| Emily Owen             | City of Glendale                                    | Water Conservation Specialist         |
| Erin Mahan             | SunSpec Alliance                                    | VP, Membership & Regulatory Affairs   |
| Ginger Ritter          | Arizona Game and Fish Department                    | Project Evaluation Program Supervisor |

|                        |                                    |                                           |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Ginger Torres          | Local First Arizona                | Vice President of Resiliency              |
| Itzel Rios-Vega        | Vote Solar                         | Regional Director, West                   |
| Jack Callahan          | Navajo County                      | Coal Community Development Mgr            |
| Jason Baran            | SRP                                | Director, State Government Affairs        |
| Jason Lowry            | Local First AZ                     | Director of Public Policy Initiatives     |
| Jenn Jenkins           | Mana Group                         |                                           |
| Jennifer Gordon        | Southwestern Power Group           | Cultural Resources Manager                |
| Jessica Potter         | Arizona Game and Fish Department   | Energy Lead, Project Evaluation Program   |
| Joantha Guthrie        | City of Tempe                      | Energy Program Administrator              |
| John B. Lewis          | Avant Energy                       | Native American Energy, Managing Director |
| Kelly T Zagrzebski     | Invenergy LLC                      | Manager - Local & Governmental Engagement |
| Lauren Taylor          | Solar United Neighbors             | Arizona Rural Organizing Associate        |
| Mac Wodicker           | Arizona State University           | Associate Director of Grid Modernization  |
| Marlon Acevedo Rios    | Arizona State University           |                                           |
| Martin (Shin Hyung) Ma | Hanwha Renewables                  | Senior Developer                          |
| Mary-Ellen Walsh       | State Historic Preservation Office | Cultural Resources Compliance Program Mgr |
| Matthew Pagan          | Leeward Renewable Energy (LRE)     | Senior Manager of Development             |
| Mischa Larisch         | Navajo County                      | Planning & Community Development Director |
| Monika Leininger       | Interwest Energy Alliance          |                                           |

|                                           |                                                 |                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| My-Tegia Lee                              | Southwest Native Assets Coalition               | Executive Director                                |
| Nathan Svenson                            | City of Phoenix                                 | Energy Analyst                                    |
| Pamela Eaton                              | Center for New Energy Economy, CSU              | Consultant                                        |
| Preston Raban                             | Apache County Economic Development              | Director                                          |
| Rebecca Tsosie                            | University of Arizona                           | Professor of Law                                  |
| Shelly Gordon                             | Arizonans for Community Choice                  | State Director                                    |
| Sheril Steinberg                          | Governor's Office of Resiliency                 | Community Outreach Coordinator and Tribal Liaison |
| Sonya Pastor La Sota                      | Dorn Policy Group                               | VP Government Relations                           |
| Stefanie Padgett                          | HDR                                             | Resources Business Group Manager                  |
| Stephen Cook                              | Yavapai Group, Grand Canyon Chapter Sierra Club | Vice Chair                                        |
| Tiago Sequeira                            | Arizona Commerce Authority                      | Director of Venture Partnerships                  |
| Tim Nuvangyaoma                           | Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy                | Vice President of Tribal Engagement               |
| Yara Marin                                | Vote Solar                                      | Deputy Program Director, West                     |
| Co-conveners, Sponsors, Facilitation Team |                                                 |                                                   |
| Maren Mahoney                             | AZ Governor's Office of Resiliency              | Director                                          |
| Blaise Caudill                            | AZ Governor's Office of Resiliency              | Deputy Director & Energy Policy Advisor           |
| Jeremiah Dean                             | AZ Governor's Office of Resiliency              | Solar Access and Resiliency Program Manager       |
| Zachary Van Tol                           | AZ Governor's Office of Resiliency              |                                                   |

|                  |                                   |                                                 |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Brian Kuehl      | Institute for Rural Collaboration | Executive Director                              |
| Jessica Western  | Institute for Rural Collaboration | Director of Research and Collaborative Learning |
| Brian Manwaring  | Southwest Decision Resources      | Senior Facilitator                              |
| Julia Guglielmo  | Southwest Decision Resources      | Senior Facilitator                              |
| Tahnee Robertson | Southwest Decision Resources      | Director and Senior Facilitator                 |

## Appendix E: Participants – Tucson (February 10, 2026)

| Participants            |                                                                                    |                                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Alexiss Adams           | Southwestern Power                                                                 |                                                    |
| Bill Kight              | Mana Group Consulting                                                              | Communications Director                            |
| Brett Isaac             | Navajo Power                                                                       | CEO                                                |
| Brianna Julia Jones     | MIT                                                                                |                                                    |
| Bruce Plenk             | GoElectricAZ                                                                       | Electrification Coach                              |
| Carlos Corcuera Coutino | City of Tucson                                                                     | FUSE Executive Fellow + Sr. PM in Renewable Energy |
| Celina Martinez         | BLM - AZ State Office                                                              | AZ Energy Branch Chief                             |
| Claire O'Donnell        | AES Clean Energy                                                                   | Developer                                          |
| Clark Bryner            | Tucson Electric Power                                                              | Manager - Siting, Outreach and Engagement          |
| Derek Eysenbach         | DOI Bureau of Land Management                                                      | Project Manager                                    |
| Fatima Luna             | City of Tucson                                                                     | Chief Resilience Officer                           |
| Jeff Low                | City of Safford                                                                    | Utilities Director                                 |
| Jeff Risley             | Renewable Energy Farmers of America                                                | Executive Director                                 |
| Jennifer Allen          | Pima County                                                                        | Pima County District 3 Supervisor                  |
| Jennifer Gordon         | Southwestern Power Group                                                           | Cultural Resources Manager                         |
| John A. 'Skip' Laitner  | Economic and Human Dimensions Research Associates                                  | Principal                                          |
| Joshua Laughlin         | Pima County                                                                        | Senior Aide                                        |
| Kaniz Fatema            | Pima County                                                                        | Environmental specialist                           |
| Karen A. Mooney         | Pinal County Planning and Zoning Commission and resident Town of San Tan Valley AZ | Commissioner for District #2 Pinal County          |

|                       |                                                 |                                              |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Karl Shaddock         | Town of Oro Valley                              | Assistant to the Town Manager                |
| Kevin Woldhagen       | DeConcini                                       | Attorney                                     |
| Lee Alter             | South32                                         | Principal, Energy & Carbon                   |
| Leslie Ethen          | City of Tucson                                  | Sustainability Manager, PDSD                 |
| Linda Bixby           | Office of Research and Partnerships, UofA       | Chief Research Partnerships Officer          |
| Luke Smith            | Town of Sahuarita                               | Management Analyst                           |
| Michael Catanzaro     | City of Tucson                                  | Energy Manager                               |
| Mike Sheehan          | Tucson Electric Power                           | VP Fuels & Resource Planning                 |
| Moises Gomez          | Local First Arizona                             | Resource Manager                             |
| Nadine Manuel         | Tohono O'odham Nation                           | Realty Officer                               |
| Natalie Shepp         | Pima County Dept of Environmental Quality       | Climate & Community Engagement Manager       |
| Neil Saunders         | Tucson Electric Power                           | Principal Renewable Development Manager      |
| Robert Bulechek       | Energy Management                               | Consultant                                   |
| Sarah Davis           | Pima County                                     | Senior Advisor                               |
| Scott Hancock         | n/a                                             | Clean Energy Professional                    |
| Sean Bowen            | Tucson Electric Power                           | Renewable Development                        |
| Stella Smith          | Sustainable Tucson                              | volunteer                                    |
| Stephanie Moreno      | South32                                         | Tribal Affairs                               |
| Steven Eddy           | Tucson Electric Power/UniSource Energy Services | Director, Public Affairs                     |
| Sunawin Merci Andrews | Navajo Power PBC                                | Director of Marketing and Impact Initiatives |
| Talia Chorover        |                                                 |                                              |

|                                           |                                    |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Tom Scott                                 | Coolidge Chamber of Commerce       | Director                                        |
| Tres English                              | Sustainable Tucson                 | Board member                                    |
| Co-conveners, Sponsors, Facilitation Team |                                    |                                                 |
| Jeremiah Dean                             | AZ Governor's Office of Resiliency | Solar Access and Resiliency Program Manager     |
| Brian Kuehl                               | Institute for Rural Collaboration  | Executive Director                              |
| Jessica Western                           | Institute for Rural Collaboration  | Director of Research and Collaborative Learning |
| Brian Manwaring                           | Southwest Decision Resources       | Senior Facilitator                              |
| Julia Guglielmo                           | Southwest Decision Resources       | Senior Facilitator                              |
| Tahnee Robertson                          | Southwest Decision Resources       | Director and Senior Facilitator                 |

## Appendix F: Presentation Slides

### Presentation 1. Overview

Presented by Tahnee Robertson, Southwest Decision Resources



### Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy

February 9-10, 2026

#### Workshop Purpose

- **Learn** about initiatives, projects, and trends related to energy across the state
- **Share** perspectives on the impacts and benefits of energy projects on Arizona's communities
- **Envision** approaches to support meaningful engagement
- **Identify** key needs, opportunities, and next steps for collaboration

#### Working Agreements

- Engage and contribute your knowledge and experience
- Be present - quiet your electronic devices
- Be succinct so everyone can participate
- Refrain from acronyms and jargon
- Listen openly and for understanding
- Treat others respectfully

#### Reasons You Are Here

- Learning about Arizona's energy landscape, including proposed policies and projects
- Discussing priorities and perspectives with various sectors of energy development
- Connecting on specific projects or opportunities
- Collectively developing best practice for engaging landowners/communities
- Working toward a sustainable and resilient energy future for the state

### Presentation 2. Governor Katie Hobbs' Office of Resiliency

Presented by Blaise Caudill and Jeremiah Dean, Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency



### Collaborating to Advance Arizona's Energy Economy

February 9 - 10, 2026

### Governor Katie Hobbs' Office of Resiliency

#### Building a Resilient Arizona For Future Generations



#### What we do

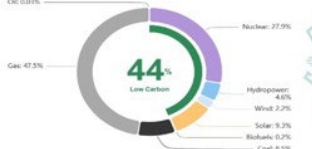


#### Current Energy Landscape

#### Key Takeaway

We must effectively plan for a rapidly transforming energy system that works for all Arizonans--all while navigating significant uncertainty.

#### Arizona's Generation Portfolio (2024)



Oil: 0.03%  
Gas: 47.5%  
Nuclear: 27.9%  
Low Carbon: 44%  
Hydroelectric: 4.0%  
Wind: 2.2%  
Solar: 9.3%  
Biofuels: 0.2%  
Coal: 0.5%

Data Source: EIA State Profile and Energy Estimates Quick Facts

#### Major Factors Impacting Arizona's Energy System

- Population and demand growth
- Extreme heat
- Changes in federal policy priorities

#### Varied Arizona Load Growth Projections



APS 2023 IRP  
SRP 2023 IRP  
TEP 2023 IRP - Balanced Scenario

Across the three major electric utilities in Arizona 18 different modeling scenarios are captured which range in group rates, policies, and assumptions.

## Extreme Heat

- In Arizona, from 2018-2022, extreme heat has led to more than 137,000 customer interruptions (Boring, 2025).
- Extreme heat introduces a **multiple** threats to grid reliability:
  - Increases cooling loads during peak demand hours
  - Reduces transmission and distribution efficiency/output
  - Increases the risk of additional equipment failure and wildfires.

30-Year Normals (1991-2020)



## H.R. 1 Impacts (National)

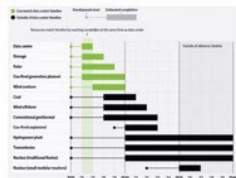
- According to the Princeton REPEAT Project, the projected nationwide impacts of H.R. 1 are:
  - Through 2035
    - Reduce new solar by ~140 gigawatts
    - Reduce new wind by ~160 gigawatts
  - An estimated **\$280 per household per year increase in energy costs** across the U.S.
  - Tariffs add further volatility to energy markets, affecting relevant supply chains
  - In late October, U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Wright directed the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to expedite interconnection of flexible large loads

## DOI Permitting Policy Change



- Changes in federal energy permitting** will impact Arizona
- Federal nexus** issues impact solar and wind projects on state and private land
- Acute impacts for Western U.S. states with a large percentage of federal lands

## Relative Technology Timelines for Meeting Demand



## Retail Electricity Prices in the Western U.S.

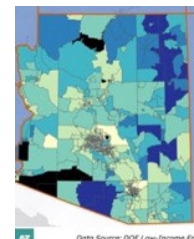
- Second-highest price per kWh of all Western states
- 13th-highest in the nation

Source: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (2025)

Average Retail Electricity Price in 2024



## Energy Burden Varies Across Arizona



## Executive Order & the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce Overview



## Executive Order 2025-13: Removing Barriers to Delivering Affordable Energy for Arizona

- Establishes the Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce
- Delivers tools to advance energy affordability
- Assists growing tribal energy enterprise and economic development
- Supports Arizona's energy industries
- Accelerates energy related project timelines on state lands
- Reduces government cost

## The Arizona Energy Promise Taskforce

- Administered by the Governor's Office of Resiliency, comprised of members from the private and public sectors, consumer advocates, and subject matter experts
- Tasked to complete the following:
  - A report detailing a policy framework to facilitate large load customer growth while minimizing impact to ratepayers
  - Developing an Arizona Energy Strategic Plan to create a roadmap on how to enable new energy generation
  - Creates plans for strategic energy infrastructure project corridors on state lands

## Energy Affordability

- Requires a coordinated effort to analyze energy affordability and how to make energy affordability programs more accessible
- Reduce executive agency energy costs through energy efficiency and conservation proposals
- Analyze transportation fuels affordability and opportunities to plan for EV adoption

## Focus on Tribal Energy Enterprise

- Supports tribal energy enterprise and economic development by directing the Governor's Office on Tribal Relations and the Governor's Office of Resiliency to convene and support tribes in their work to advance project development

## Supporting Arizona's Energy Industry

- Provides technical assistance and 1:1 support for energy-related businesses navigating changes in federal permitting and tax credit opportunities

## Accelerating Energy Project Timelines

- Provides clarity for energy-related projects looking to site on state land
- Reduces timelines for energy-related projects by identifying opportunities to streamline and expedite State Land processes
- Creates plans for strategic energy project corridors on state lands

## Collaboration

Each report stemming from this Executive Order will include multiple recommendations that will benefit from community engagement throughout implementation.

Thank you!

## Presentation 3. Energy Projects and Engagement

Presented by Dr. Jessica Western, Institute for Rural Collaboration

**Applying Public Engagement Best Practices for Clean Energy**

www.rurallcollaboration.org  
Brian Kuehl: Brian.Kuehl@rurallcollaboration.com  
Jessica Western: Ph.D., www.ziggoosecreativeresolutions.com

### Review of Public Engagement Methods related to Renewable Energy

Literature review of global public engagement methods related to renewable energy:

- DAD: Decide-Announce-Defend most prevalent
- Need for change

### Why Meaningful Public Engagement?

- Build "social license": ongoing community or stakeholder acceptance of an organization, project, or its activities. This may mean gaining acceptance by several groups, not just one community.
- Improved governance: build trust in institutions
- Time and cost savings
- Better outcomes: long-lasting, buildable

Photo: Peter Gustin

### What is "Meaningful Public Engagement"?

- **Federal Highways Administration:**
  - Does not mean that every issue or concern raised by the community must be resolved.
  - Does mean that there is a diligent effort to engage in a meaningful public dialogue with the communities impacted by a proposed action, listen to what they have to say and respond to their comments and concerns.
  - Community's comments are incorporated into the decision-making process where practicable.
- **Institute for Healthcare Improvement**
- **Environmental Protection Agency**

### Best Practices

Sources: NREL, TNC, EU Institutes Agreement among all sources, re.:

- Engagement approach
- Stakeholder assessment and/or mapping
- Connecting to the community
- Information and learning
- Full, open and transparent exchange
- Methods
- Create trust with the public through accountability
- Community benefits

Photo: Samantha Lindberg

### Meaningful Public Engagement Process Characteristics

**Going from Practice to Implementation.**

- Public deliberation of interests, information, issues and options.
- Respond to the public with what proposed options will be implemented or not, and why.
- Include all stakeholder groups in deliberations.
- Use an experienced, neutral facilitator.
- Follow through the whole process.

## Presentation 4. Engagement Best Practices

Presented by Dr. Jessica Western, Institute for Rural Collaboration

**Applying Public Engagement Best Practices for Clean Energy**

www.rurallcollaboration.org  
Brian Kuehl: Brian.Kuehl@rurallcollaboration.com  
Jessica Western: Ph.D., www.ziggoosecreativeresolutions.com

### Two Meaningful Public Engagement Methods

**Collaborative Learning:** Open to the public – interests, issues and options with report back. Breakout groups.

**Consensus Building:** Stakeholder representatives – interests, issues, options, tradeoffs, agreement. Breakout groups and plenary sessions.

### Decide Announce Defend - DAD

## Meaningful Public Engagement



## Resources

**Facilitation, Process Design, Knowledge Brokers:**

- Local neutral experienced facilitators e.g. Southwest Decision Resources, the Participation Company.

### Training:

- Local consultants
- National Center for Environmental Dispute Resolution
- Ruckelshaus Institute, University of Wyoming
- Environmental Dispute Resolution Program, University of Utah

## Conclusion

- Need for more meaningful public engagement around clean energy.
- There are great resources to provide best practices.
- There are great resources to help apply them, including trainings and local facilitators.
- Potential time and cost savings.
- Helps build community and trust.



## Appendix G: Participant Questions and Answers (During Presentations)

This is a summary of participant questions and responses for the presentation sections of the workshops. Setting the Stage: Arizona Governor's Office of Resiliency (Blaise Caudill and Jeremiah Dean)

**Q: We are using energy more efficiently now than we have in the past - which has solved more than 50% of our challenges since 1973. Why aren't we putting more focus on efficiency to meet growing demand?**

*A: The Energy Strategic Plan that is currently under development by the Taskforce is exploring efficiency to help address the state's energy needs and will include recommendations related to energy efficiency. In addition, utilities do have programs around energy efficiency, and the state also administers an efficiency plan - but it is recognized that more is needed.*

**Q: One of the state's stated priorities is affordable energy. Utility companies' rates are increasing by 14% or more each year, and the bills for average citizens are also going up. Affordable energy is not being passed down to consumers. What are the safeguards for rising energy bills?**

*A: Until the past year, the state level has not supported those safeguards. As you are aware, the Arizona Corporation Commission has its own regulatory authority, and there is not much the governor's office can do to impact those decisions. The situation is similar with the state legislature. For what we can control, Governor Hobbs has taken a big step by looking at the strategies and ways we can begin to focus on maintaining affordability for ratepayers.*

**Q: A lot of OOR's presentation has a good foundation, but it seems like the Governor's task force is ready to advance their thinking and release the report with major underpinnings missing. For example, water and carbon emissions need to be considered. How can we help you lay more of a foundation from the physics, chemistry, and biology perspective?**

*A: The working groups within the Task Force include economists, nuclear scientists, and other experts across the board who are putting data into the strategy and reports. You are correct that the challenges in Arizona are complex; they involve water and many other aspects. The Task Force is incorporating a lot of those in the report.*

**Q: What is OOR's position on legislation that is being introduced that negatively impacts renewable energy development?**

*A: The Governor's Office has been clear that they support renewable energy projects. They will continue supporting renewable energy and providing leadership on this issue. They will not support any legislation that inhibits renewable energy projects.*

**Q: What is OOR's position on nuclear projects? Is OOR talking to the Commission and to utilities about the nuclear workshop?**

*A: Yes, the Governor's office is supportive of nuclear projects that are done in a smart way and have been engaged in those conversations.*

**Q: Who is the intended audience for the Taskforce's Policy framework - and, who will be responsible for moving it forward?**

*A: Broad, diverse partnerships are required to meet Arizona's energy challenge. The policy framework will provide the path forward. And, it will require everyone working together to implement those plans. Setting the Stage: Institute for Rural Collaboration (Jessica Western)*

**Q: In some cases, energy produced in Arizona is being sent to other states. How can and should community members engage on these types of projects?**

*A: Yes, this does occur. In these instances, it should be made clear to the community where the energy will be used and there ideally should be a discussion about the trade-offs of the project.*

**Q: In the “Decide, Announce, Defend” diagram, you mentioned this process often occurs around renewable energy. Is there a distinction in the literature between how engagement is done for renewable energy and traditional energy types?**

*A: Our institute only focuses on renewable energy, but my personal impression as a social scientist is that the methods would lend themselves to all types of energy. Energy is getting to the point where people are worrying about when and how our sense of place is going to be affected. The public does not necessarily distinguish between energy sources regarding their concerns.*

**Additional participant comments:**

- One participant suggested that the state should “re-DAD”, i.e. have a fundamental re-thinking of understanding of energy and its resources.
- There was nothing presented here about energy efficiency, which is a key part of the solution.

**Engagement Best Practices: Institute for Rural Collaboration (Jessica Western)**

**Q: When referring to the “public,” who is included in that definition?**

*A: It may differ by situation. It recommended that the government or developer begin a project by assessing the stakeholder landscape and defining who the public and stakeholder groups are. This will allow them to create an engagement process that best meets the needs of the community.*