

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2023 • VOL. 81 / NO. 6

PUBLIC POWER MAGAZINE

AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

The Partnerships Issue



American Heritage, Ingenuity, & Manufacturing

When Quality, Performance, Service, & Choices Intersect

Exquisitely crafted ornate LED luminaires, lamp posts, bollards, and traffic bases, proudly manufactured in America. Classic Made Better.

Explore our extensive line of lighting products and custom solutions at www.SpringCity.com



SUPERIOR COLLECTION
OF OVER 6,000 MOLDS



www.SpringCity.com | 610-948-4000
ONE SOUTH MAIN STREET | SPRING CITY, PA 19475

APPA ACADEMY | AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

Join Friends and Colleagues

With face-to-face and virtual events, the APPA Academy offers professional development opportunities for all your networking and learning needs.

Virtual Events

Accounting Fundamentals Series

9 sessions | 3 hours each

- Public Utility Accounting (Jan. 9, 10 & 11)
- Work Order & Fixed Asset Accounting (March 12 & 13)
- Advanced Public Utility Accounting (May 8, 9, 15 & 16)

Public Power Forward Series: Harnessing Trends in Energy Technology

6 sessions | 3.5 hours each

- Electric Vehicles (Jan. 16 & 18)
- Energy Storage (Feb. 13 & 15)
- Hydrogen (Feb. 20 & 22)

Key Accounts Certificate Program: Cohort Group

Jan. 22 – Feb. 23 | 20 recorded lessons | 3 live webinars

Underground Distribution Series

9 sessions | 4 hours each

- Underground Distribution Systems (Jan. 23, 24, 25, 30, 31; Feb. 1)
- Advanced Underground Distribution Systems (Feb. 27, 28 & 29)

Leadership Fundamentals for New Managers and Supervisors

4 sessions | 2 hours each

- Building High-Performing Teams (March 7)
- Leading People (March 14)
- Managing Effectively (March 21)
- Becoming an Inspiring Leader (March 28)

In-Person

Joint Action Conference

Jan. 7 – 9 | Naples, Florida

CEO Roundtable

March 17 – 19 | Pasadena, California

Lineworkers Rodeo

April 5 – 6 | Lafayette, Louisiana

Engineering & Operations Conference

April 7 – 10 | New Orleans, Louisiana

On-Demand

Check out our new on-demand training, including self-paced training classes as well as recordings of some of our most popular virtual classes.

Learn more at www.PublicPower.org/APPAAcademy

AMERICAN
PUBLIC POWER
ASSOCIATION
Powering Strong Communities



PUBLIC POWER MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

THE PARTNERSHIPS ISSUE

4 Shared Challenges and Solutions

Scott Corwin, APPA's president and CEO, on how partnerships are essential for addressing our members' needs and in finding new solutions.

6 Supporting Resilience Together

A look at how public power providers are involved in efforts to make the electric grid more resilient and who they are working with to make the projects a reality.

12 Empowering Tomorrow's Workforce

How public power utilities have teamed up with local schools and other organizations to support a pipeline of potential talent and boost energy literacy.

18 Partnering for Federal Funding

The opportunities for leveraging federal funding for public power projects are numerous – as are the entities that can help.

22 Collaborating with Community

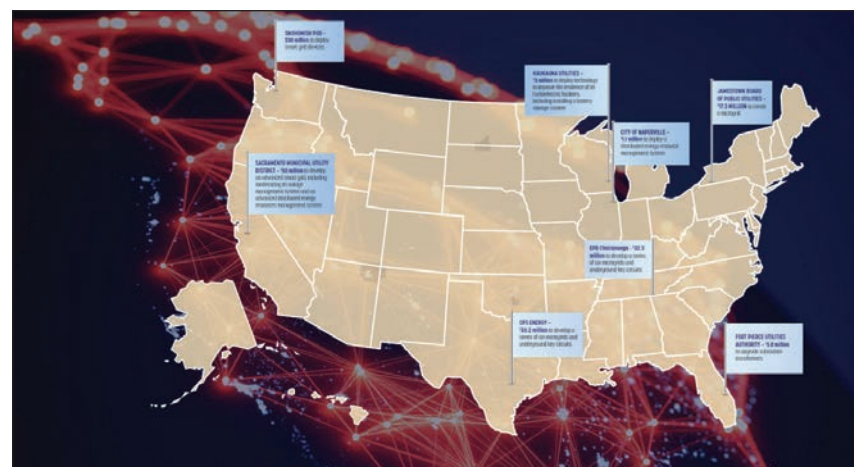
Read how three public power providers have worked with local groups to showcase a shared commitment to the community.

30 Q&A with Jackie Crowley

The leader of Middleborough Gas and Electric in Massachusetts on the challenges and opportunities facing public power leaders.

32 Collaboration Breeds Innovation

How bringing different perspectives together can foster ideas and support success in trying out new technology or utility programs.



20 Who Has Grid Resilience Grants?

View this map to see how much funding states and territories have for grid resilience projects, and highlights of some of the public power projects funded through the Department of Energy.

38 Reducing Risk in Partnerships

Considerations and strategies for keeping formal relationships – whether with vendors or other collaborators – from going sour.

40 Who Public Power Partners With

Check out this visual overview of the variety of third parties public power utilities engage for support on operations and other tasks.

AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS 2023-2024

- CHAIR:** DAVID OSBURN, Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority, OK
- CHAIR-ELECT:** NICOLAS LAWLER, Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments, MA
- VICE CHAIR:** JOHN HAARLOW, Snohomish County PUD, WA
- TREASURER:** LAYNE BURNINGHAM, Utah Municipal Power Agency, UT
- IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR:** ANTHONY CANNON, Greenville Utilities Commission, NC

DIRECTORS

- DANIEL BEANS, Roseville Electric Utility, CA • CHUCK BRYANT, Carthage Water and Electric Plant, MO • BRET CARROLL, Conway Corp., AR • DAVID CARROLL, Paducah Power System, KY • THOMAS FALCONE, Long Island Power Authority, NY • JAMES FULLER, MEAG Power, GA • EDWARD GERAK, Irrigation and Electrical Districts Association of Arizona, AZ • DAVID GESCHWIND, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, MN • JASON GREY, Danville Utilities Department, VA • JONATHAN HAND, Electric Cities of Alabama, AL • ROSEMARY HENRY, Wyoming Municipal Power Agency, WY • ROY JONES, Electric Cities of North Carolina, NC • THOMAS KENT, Nebraska Public Power District, NE • EDWARD KRIEGER, Piqua Power System, OH • PAUL LAU, SMUD, CA • DAVID LEATHERS, Jamestown Board of Public Utilities, NY • BEATRICE LIMTIACO, Guam Power Authority, Guam • PAUL MAHLBERG, Kansas Municipal Energy Agency, KS • JASON MCPHERSON, City of Marlow, OK • GARY MILLER, Bryan Texas Utilities, TX • STEPHEN MORRISON, Borough of Ephrata Electric Division, PA • RUSSELL OLSON, Heartland Energy, SD • MICHAEL PETERS, WPPI Energy, WI • ANTHONY POCHARD, Anderson Municipal Light and Power, IN • DEBRA SMITH, Seattle City Light, WA • BRIAN SOLSBEE, Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association, TN • LYNNE TEJEDA, Keys Energy Services, FL • DAVID WALTERS, Grand Haven Board of Light and Power, MI • DARREL WENZEL, Waverly Utilities, IA • AMY ZUBALY, Florida Municipal Electric Association, FL

EX OFFICIO

- NICKI FULLER, Chair, Advisory Committee, Southwestern Power Resources Association, OK
- JEFF HALL, Chair, Policy Makers Council, Benton PUD, WA

OUR TEAM

Editor

Susan Partain

Design

Julio Guerrero
Sharon Winfield

Contributing Writers

David Blaylock
Scott Corwin
John Egan
Sarah Mathias

INQUIRIES

Editorial

News@PublicPower.org

202-467-2900

Subscriptions

Subscriptions@PublicPower.org

202-467-2900

Advertising

Justin Wolfe, Justin.Wolfe@theysgroup.com

Advertising is managed by The YGS Group.

Public Power Magazine (ISSN 0033-3654) is published six times a year by the American Public Power Association, 2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22202-4804. © 2023, American Public Power Association. Opinions expressed in articles are not policies of the Association. Periodical postage paid in Arlington, Va., and additional mailing offices.

For permission to reprint articles, contact News@PublicPower.org.



ABOUT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

The American Public Power Association is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. We advocate before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 49 million customers that public power utilities serve, and the 93,000 people they employ. Our association offers expertise on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations. We empower members to strengthen their communities by providing superior service, engaging citizens, and instilling pride in community-owned power.

Postmaster, send all address changes to:

American Public Power Association
2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000
Arlington, VA 22202

SHARED CHALLENGES AND SHARED SOLUTIONS

BY SCOTT CORWIN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

The theme of partnership flows through this issue with some compelling stories from among our membership. In my first few months on the job, I've seen plenty of examples not only of how American Public Power Association staff members partner with each other and our utility members, but also how we facilitate partnerships with federal agencies, other trades, and our associate members. These collaborations help strengthen our advocacy, provide well-rounded education and training opportunities, and forge the connection between members, vendors, and communities that help utilities stay a step ahead.

APPA has vitally strong and essential partnerships with our members. From defining our annual policy priorities to developing educational resources and curating news and information, our work reflects the views and priorities of utility members. This is how we developed permitting reform priorities; strategies on supply chain concerns; the clarifications needed by Treasury to effectively implement new elective pay incentives, protecting hydropower assets that keep the grid reliable; and our pointed critique of the substance and timelines in the Environmental Protection Agency's greenhouse gas proposal that is moving toward a final rulemaking in spring 2024. There isn't much an association can accomplish without close partnerships.

The robust mutual aid network is another long-standing example of effective working partnerships — not only in coordinating how resources get

shared, but in how the structure of the agreements and recovery work align to minimize risk and maximize crew safety. In 2023, we worked with members during major events, like Hurricane Idalia, and in mutual aid exercises and workshops on incident planning and response. There were also numerous collaborative efforts to enhance grid security, such as creating projects and toolkits for members on cybersecurity, updating the *Physical Security Essentials Guide*, and working with the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council to enhance partnerships between utilities, trades, and federal agencies, including during the biennial national Grid Exercise, or GridEx.

Continuing to meet the challenges of our quickly evolving industry requires effective use of expertise at all levels. Working groups of APPA members are learning from each other and helping create tools for areas such as the energy transition, rate design, electric vehicles, and energy storage. Grants and scholarships through the Demonstration of Energy and Efficiency Developments program allow members to explore and share new knowledge with communities across the country: partnership in its broadest and most applicable form. Meeting tomorrow's challenges also means developing the governance and workforce of utilities today. Our on-demand series, *Public Power Governance Essentials*, and work on energy career awareness with the Center for Energy Workforce Development are two of many steps in APPA's continued focus to create much-needed resources in these areas.

As we refine and refocus our initiatives for 2024, I am excited about the programs already underway and those we are planning for the new year. Whether advocacy, education, technical expertise, or messaging about the benefits of public power, the end value of our partnerships should be felt across the thousands of public power communities we serve. If there are areas where we can help you collaborate better that you aren't seeing in our suite of services now, please let me know. Wishing you all a joyous season and a very happy new year.



Stratus IQ+

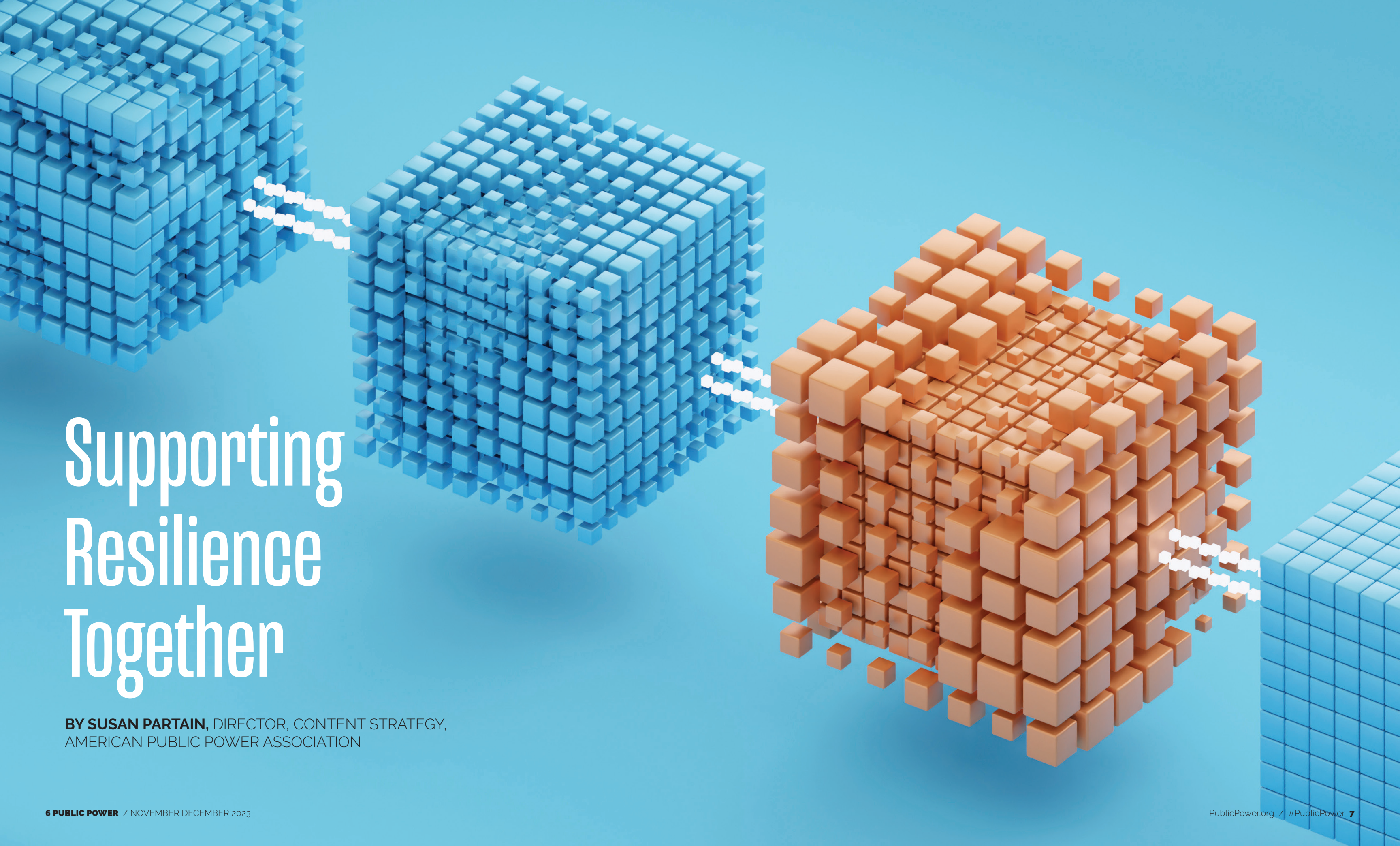
TAKING THE GRID TO NEXT-LEVEL SMART

Grid edge intelligence and precise energy measurement now come in one powerful package: Stratus IQ+. It's the modern metering solution that delivers near-real time data to utilities, enables data-driven distribution decisions, and offers expanded communication options including FlexNet®, cellular, and WiFi for future-ready connectivity.



SCAN TO MEET STRATUS IQ+





Supporting Resilience Together

BY SUSAN PARTAIN, DIRECTOR, CONTENT STRATEGY,
AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

With many opportunities coming from the bipartisan infrastructure law, or Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, public power utilities and agencies are finding themselves in the new position of going after and managing aspects of federal funds. A particular funding area of interest is around the programs to support boosting grid resilience, as the funding can be applied to a host of grid modernization and hardening efforts that might have been on a utility's wish list.

Navigating the federal funding process — from the application to keeping up with requirements and executing on major projects — requires a broad array of expertise and time. Here's what a few public power providers learned about the process, including other groups who helped along the way or are likely to be key to the project's success.

Small Team, Big Plans

For Jamestown Board of Public Utilities in New York, having a small team was an asset for its proposal to develop a microgrid in its downtown area.

"For a small team, it took everyone working hard to get the proposal together, but also small teams have the advantage of being able to be make decisions quickly and the team members feel directly accountable to do

their best quickly," said Kristofor Sellstrom, Electric Transmission and Distribution Manager at Jamestown BPU.

The BPU will receive up to \$17.3 million from the Department of Energy through the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships program for the microgrid, and the BPU will have a nearly \$5.8 million cost share. The microgrid aims to boost resilience and reliability for key buildings in the downtown area, which includes a hospital, first responders and shelters, key businesses, and city government. The project will add advanced controls, black start, and battery storage to its generation facility, upgrade aging underground cables, and add smaller, distributed battery storage and distributed energy controls throughout the area.

During normal conditions, the new battery assets could be dispatched to manage the grid and during times of high demand. The new underground-fed electric vehicle charging stations to be added could leverage the system anytime. In and following major events, the microgrid could help to keep power flowing to at minimum the 608 customers directly on the downtown grid, and potentially help feed the entire community of 19,000 as long as overhead lines were not damaged and it is not during a system peak time.

The negotiation process with DOE should take about six months, after which the BPU will have a final scope of work and budget and can get the project underway, including getting bids from potential contractors.

"It will be interesting to see how this deployment works because we are trying to do it all at once," he said. And while the BPU plans to keep project management in-house, Sellstrom said their interest is in finding a vendor that can offer a fairly holistic solution.

In addition to the vendors BPU expects to work with, Sellstrom noted how the project will require more engagement with the customers with battery deployment and eventual conversations about demand response and rates that can better value distributed resources.

Sellstrom said the project application came together by starting to bring the team together to discuss the suite of items the public power utility would like to accomplish, and then, when the specific grant opportunity opened, aligning these items with the funding opportunities.

A grant writer affiliated with the city helped the BPU team get access to the various federal portals and forms necessary to complete the application and community benefits program, but the technical writing was handled in house. He credited cloud-based document sharing as a key capability for the team approach to writing the concept paper, which allowed for contributors to provide real-time input within the short application timeline.

"The concept paper is a great way to vet your idea, to get it on 'paper,' and learn who in your group has buy in. It helps solidify the idea, and could help move it forward," he said. "Then, if a grant opens that aligns

with your goals, it isn't as hard to go after it. That's what happened here. We have wanted to do all of these projects, but lacked the resources, and we realized we can do all of them under this one solicitation, so why not ask for it?"

Putting all the ideas into a concept paper, Sellstrom said, allowed the team to identify and work through any holes in the plan, which led to a stronger, comprehensive project. "The effort is probably worth it even if you don't submit the grant application."

Strengthening Connections

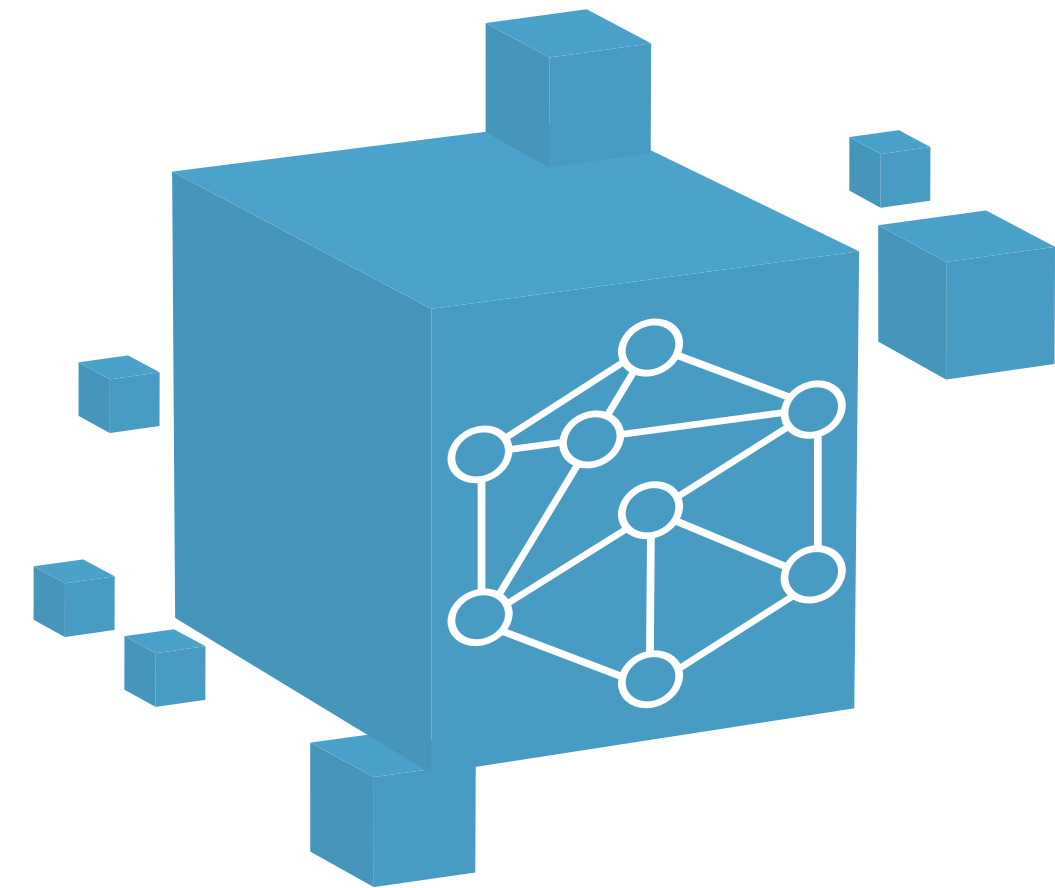
The Naperville Electric Utility in Illinois is also part of the first round of projects announced for the GRIP program. The public power utility, which serves about 62,000 electric customers, was awarded \$1.1 million and will be using the funds to develop a distributed energy resources management system for its tech-oriented area.

Brian Groth, the electric utility's director, said that there are a proportionally large number of electric vehicle drivers within its system, and that its local school system is planning to transition its fleet of buses to electric ones. Being able to manage this load and these resources effectively and efficiently necessitates the development of a DERMS and other systems, including conservation voltage reduction.

The utility works closely with the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency, which is Naperville's power provider, to forecast load and reduce system peak.

"Our goal is to shave Naperville's peak, and then IMEA's as a whole," said Groth. He said that IMEA currently operates its demand response program, including calling businesses during peak times to help curb usage. He would like for the new DERMS software to automate and expand that process.

A big part of the success of this program will be in engaging customers with these resources. That means starting with the low-hanging fruit of customers with EV chargers and programmable thermostats. The utility currently has a rebate program for residents to install EV chargers, and Groth said they are looking at moving the rebate to being applicable only to bidirectional chargers, so the utility can potentially access that energy. A part of changing customer interactions will likely be expanding its energy



portal, which allows customers to see real-time consumption data and serves as a communication channel for the utility. Groth said the adoption rate for the portal is already fairly robust, with about 10% of customers using it.

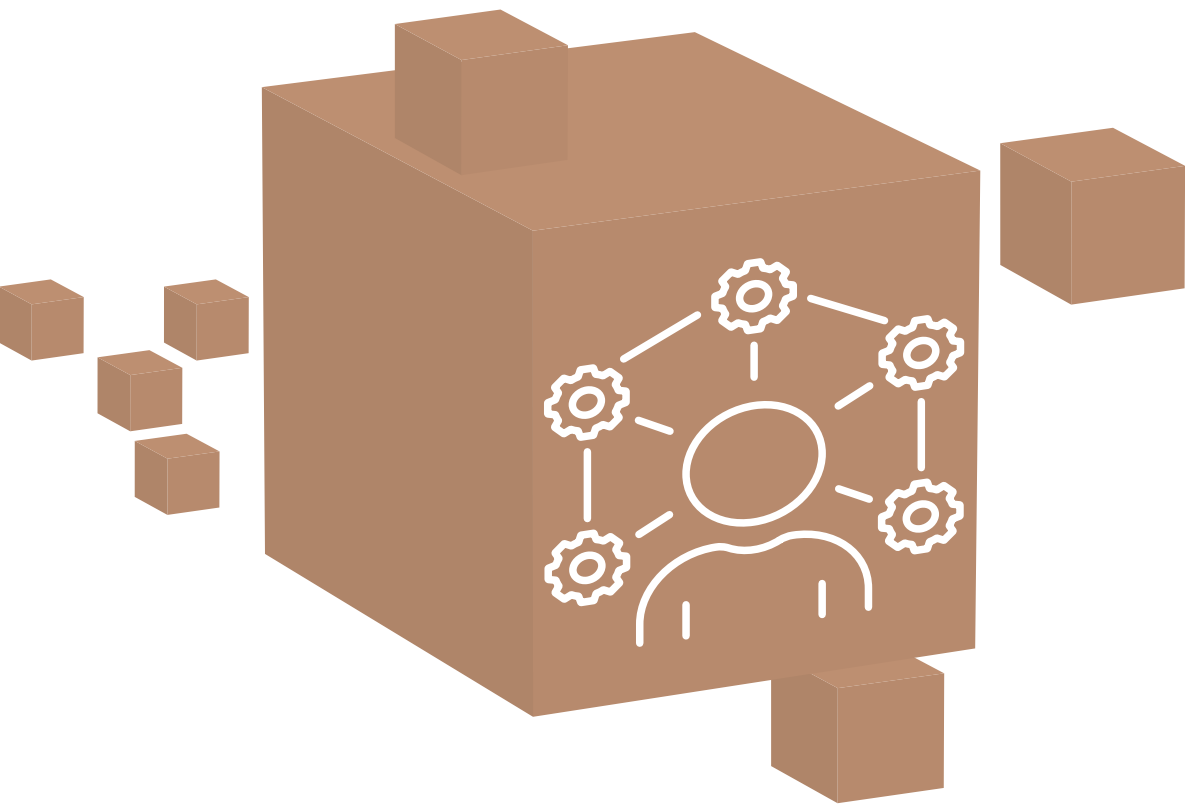
Another part of his vision for the project, long-term, is that these systems may be able to help make better use of existing facilities and equipment by giving keener insight into real usage trends. In the case of the utility's EV driver population, for example, the utility is looking at actual usage when there is a cluster of EVs on a transformer, and if usage is properly staged, before automatically pegging the transformer for an upgrade. The utility previously received federal funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to deploy advanced metering infrastructure, and the AMI data has helped in right-sizing transformers.

Groth said the utility engaged a consulting firm to pull together the grant application.

"We worked with various SCADA vendors and DERMS providers to align our goals before we applied to make sure our goals were realistic and something we could reasonably obtain," said Groth.

While Groth acknowledges that the general idea of DERMS isn't new, the full suite of components the utility is looking to deploy is a more cutting-edge model.

SUPPORTING RESILIENCE TOGETHER



“We have been talking to a lot of manufacturers, large customers, specifically the school district, to make sure that new purchases are compatible with our system in general. Want to be sure we have all the options available,” he said. “When things move quickly, you want to be sure you are as flexible as possible for the future.”

Leveraging Local Expertise

In South Carolina, Santee Cooper was named the administrator for the Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grant awards, overseeing the competitive selection process for projects to receive funding under the initiative. The first award cycle, announced in May 2023, awarded \$10.4 million to the state for projects to strengthen and modernize the grid.

Vicky Budreau, Santee Cooper’s chief customer officer, said that the involvement in federal funding programs has been a learning process for the state agency, which has not historically gone after grants. But, she said, given the volume of grant money available, the agency saw it as an opportunity to put its experience to good use.

“This is a way we can show value back to the state, to leverage our experience as a utility for how to administer it effectively for the state of South Carolina,” she said.

Budreau said the Santee Cooper team engaged a third party to set up how to receive and evaluate proposals, and that the third party will also be helping to administer the grants.

According to the program narrative, the focus for South Carolina is on projects that help prevent or mitigate disruptions from natural hazards including hurricanes and tropical storms, floods, tornadoes, and severe winter weather. Projects should be able to be readily implemented and applicants can be transmission owners and operators or distribution providers. The project goals, according to the fact sheet posted by DOE, include those that enhance situational awareness, harden or adapt the electric system, reduce tree-related damage, or provide adaptive capacity (e.g., storage and microgrids) around extreme weather events. At least a third of the

state formula funds are set aside for utilities that sell 4,000,000 megawatt-hours or less per year.

Budreau said that some of the smaller entities that applied for funding in the first round engaged third parties to help put the application package together.

Given the requirements and resources required to complete the application, Budreau said she wouldn’t be surprised to see future applicants come from collaborative efforts. Although, she did note the relative funding allotment for South Carolina does limit the scale of what projects can achieve.

“There is a lot of bureaucratic burden that comes with the dollars, so be prepared,” cautioned Budreau. “One of the things that our accountants kept pointing out to us is that when you get an award, and you look at all the reporting that you’re going to do, it will be very similar to what you do with [the Federal Emergency Management Agency].”

As with Sellstrom in Jamestown, Budreau pointed to the value in going through the concept paper process to help hone the concepts and projects before getting into the full-blown application process.



Embrace Innovation

Stay ahead of the evolving energy landscape with Milsoft's new Behind-The-Meter Modeling software. Unlock the full potential of your grid efficiency and demand response programs by incorporating customer energy usage and behind-the-meter generation like solar photovoltaic.

Enhance reliability and elevate customer service with improved accuracy of usage and generation profiles.

Please don't take our word for it, though. Let us show you.

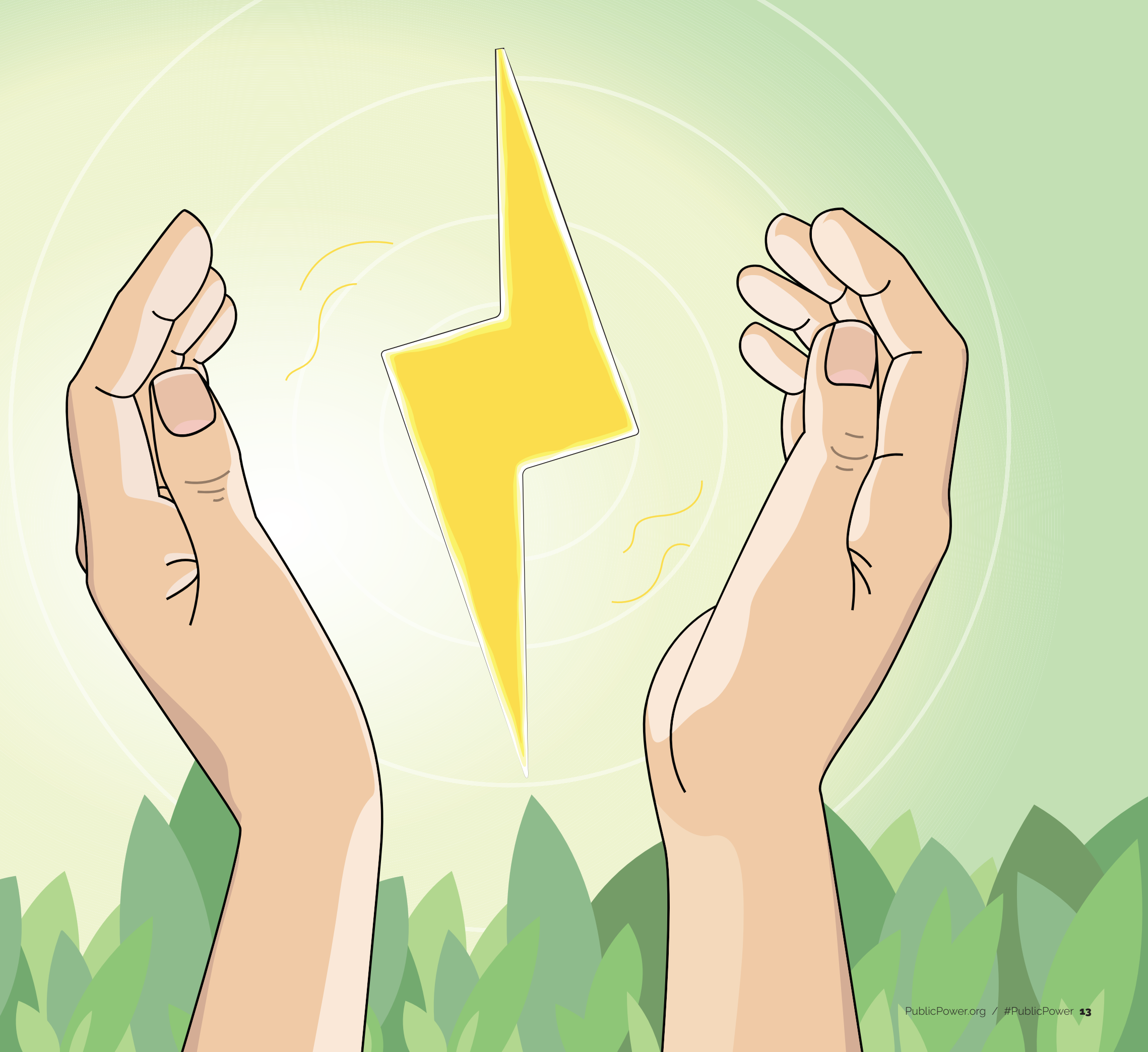
Providing Powerful Software for Power Systems Professionals Since 1989.

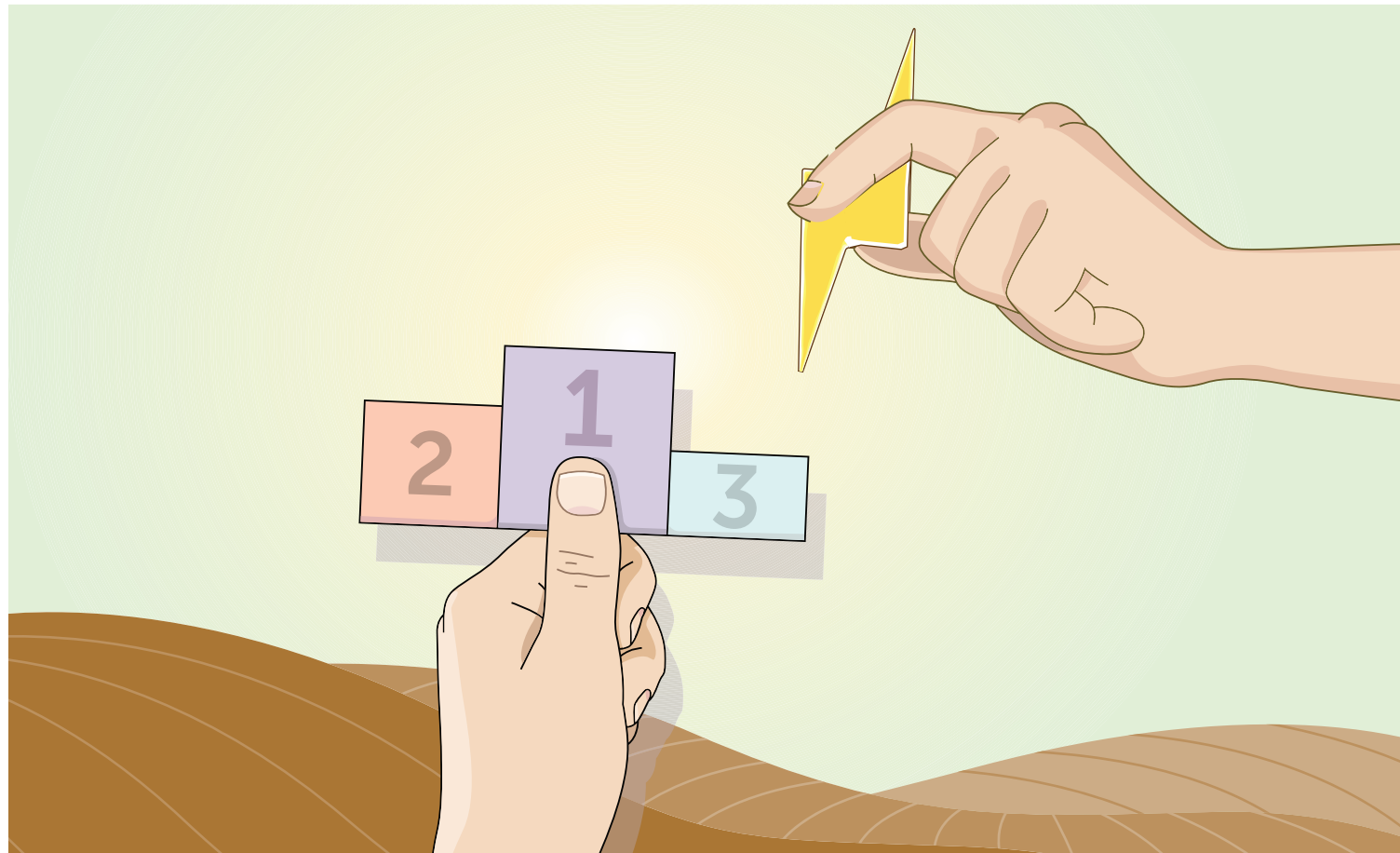
Engineering Analysis • Outage Management • GIS & Field Engineering • Automated Customer Services • Enterprise Accounting & Billing • Financial Management • Work Management

EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S PUBLIC POWER WORKFORCE

BY DAVID BLAYLOCK, SENIOR DIRECTOR, MEMBER
ENGAGEMENT AND DATA ANALYSIS, AMERICAN PUBLIC
POWER ASSOCIATION

There are few challenges facing the energy industry today more acute and pressing than workforce development. Ongoing retirements from the baby boomer generation, sped up retirements from Gen Xers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and other employees leaving as part of the Great Resignation compound the need to bring in and cultivate new workers.





These new workers aren't needed simply to fill in the shoes of those who left, but to provide new skill sets that include understanding and using the technologies that are cornerstones of the future electric utility. This is an even greater priority than the ones faced by previous eras of utility managers.

To face these challenges, many utilities have formed partnerships with external organizations with the shared goal of developing a robust workforce pipeline. These partnerships can come in many forms, beginning at the K-12 level, moving on to postsecondary and skills education, and into the early-career positioning of new hires. Two public power utilities are taking this on through multiple strong partnerships that reflect their interest in strengthening their workforce while building a deeper connection with their communities.

PLANTING THE SEEDS

The Omaha Public Power District in Nebraska has emphasized electricity education in the classroom through the Energy Education Program. OPPD partnered with the National Energy Education Development, or NEED, Project to create STEM-based curriculum for teachers to use to convey energy subjects for students from elementary to high school. This involves a two-prong approach, with instruction offered for both students and for the teachers.

On the student side, OPPD Energy Consultant Eric BenSalah teaches four different classes: solar energy, wind energy, energy efficiency and conservation, and energy source exploration. Each one comes with hands-on exercises that help students learn the science and engineering fundamentals behind energy, with activities tailored to the age of the students. In these classes, students create working projects such as a solar oven, an operational windmill, and mini energy-efficient homes that are tested under heat lamps. For energy source exploration, which pulls together all the various forms of energy generation, students are given a couple weeks after the class to construct dioramas about their chosen energy source and present them in an energy expo for fellow students and BenSalah.

The offering goes beyond just the delivery of a curriculum by including workshops and trainings with area teachers where OPPD staff bring in a retired teacher to go through best practices and proven pedagogic approaches to help students understand the course material.

The program started with a pitch by BenSalah in 2019 to create an energy efficiency education program. He quickly discovered both the need for more extensive resources to cover some opportunities in the curriculum and specific items teachers were vocal about needing help in developing.

"I approached them with some of the normal things you see in this type of course, where it's essentially a course in a box, and they came back to me saying, 'That's fine, but don't do that. We might do that once, but we'll then never do it again afterward,'" said BenSalah. "They told me

what they needed was help more than anything; that they needed to not have a basic activity but wanted to understand for themselves the changes in the science standards and what is being taught in this course."

BenSalah met with five different school districts in OPPD's territory and collected information on their needs and interests. This led him to weigh the pros and cons of various partners, finding NEED had the greatest coverage and best model in its existing curriculum that matched the teachers' interest.

"NEED did a lot of research on their end to make sure what they were building fit exactly to the Nebraska state standards for science while creating something that fit into how the district's teachers were approaching those standards without creating new added burdens," he said.

Although NEED had originally planned to teach the courses, BenSalah recognized that there was a cost-saving and trust-building opportunity to be had by letting OPPD take a front seat in this partnership. He now teaches all of the classes in the program for students, taking the name "Mr. E," which he says students often guess means "Mr. Energy" or "Mr. Electricity."

"I wanted OPPD in the classroom, not just a sticker on a box. Now they see me in this orange jacket and bow tie as a representative of OPPD, understand who we are and what we do."

ERIC BENSALAH
ENERGY CONSULTANT
OMAHA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT, NEBRASKA



**the power of
teamwork.
TOGETHER.
HERE FOR YOU 24/7/365**

Your community counts on you to provide customer service. But what happens when your team is stretched thin? That's where CRC steps in acting as a seamless extension of your workforce!



contact-dispatch center | alarm monitoring
www.crc.coop | 800-892-1578 | info@crc.coop

“We've gone from being in an extremely difficult situation to now being in a place where, when a lineman retires or moves on to another job, we can quickly bring in an apprentice to fill that gap.”

GREG LABBÉ

ELECTRIC OPERATIONS MANAGER
LAFAYETTE UTILITIES SYSTEM, LOUISIANA

“I wanted OPPD in the classroom, not just a sticker on a box,” he said. “Now they see me in this orange jacket and bow tie as a representative of OPPD, understand who we are and what we do.”

He said this pays short- and long-term dividends for OPPD, with students becoming employees and customers of the district. “We’re kind of playing the long game here, reaching all these students now for all the ways they will be involved with OPPD in the future while also building trust with the parents right now, who recognize that their children have had positive educational experiences with OPPD. There are a lot of little qualitative tentacles that this program touches.”

Though the program builds foundational knowledge of the operations and technologies in a utility job, there is a separate presentation focused specifically on electric utility employment that can be added to the courses upon request.

Whether appended to the existing courses or added as a separate class, BenSalah said he focuses in on an overview of OPPD specifically, then his group’s work before expanding to talk broadly about all the different types of careers in the industry and the further education that is required for them, connecting it to some of what the students have already learned about in the previous courses.

“And then, importantly, I turn to telling them about my journey,” he added. “I came in from learning a trade — heating and air conditioning — rather than graduating from college, so they have something to attach to these jobs and understand how, while there are paths focused on degree programs, there are also paths based on experience and learning a trade.”

Even if students don’t come away from the program looking at a future working for the public power utility, BenSalah has found that many still come away as advocates for the public power business model after hearing about how OPPD and others connect with their employees and their communities.

“When I talk about OPPD being a public power company, and the special role public power plays across Nebraska, as a state entirely operated by public power, they get excited about how special that is and the positive things about having a public power company,” he said. “They’ve outright

said to me, “That’s really cool — and much better than a big corporation.”

“This feedback shows that what we are saying and what they are learning is aligning with how OPPD can connect with its community, including those still in school.”

CREATING OPTIONS

At Lafayette Utilities System in Louisiana, that connection is being nurtured through partnerships that look at the period between graduation and joining the utility. According to Greg Labbé, LUS electric operations manager, this initiative came partially out of a love for local coordination, but also out of necessity.

“About five years ago, we were in need of linemen to fill jobs, not just for us, but for everyone in the area,” Labbé said. “We met with CLECO (an IOU) and SLEMCO (a co-op) and approached South Louisiana Community College about how we might be able to create a linemen school.”

“As a partnership, we all worked through all the steps such as setting up the school, getting it certified, and bringing awareness to its offerings. That gives us the needed funnel for linemen that we really needed. We’ve gone from being in an extremely difficult situation to now being in a place where, when a lineman retires or moves on to another job, we can quickly bring in an apprentice to fill that gap.”

Since the creation of the school, Labbé estimates that LUS has hired 10 to 15 lineworkers straight out of the program, including all apprentices hired since it started.

Even when reaching out to do career days at the high schools, like it has long done, LUS still partners with SLCC to make sure that this career opportunity is brought front and center to prospective employees looking at their options out of high school.

“We’re able to make it clear that we’re not looking to recruit out of high school — that there’s this great school through SLCC that channels them to us after they learn the job rather than having to learn everything on the job here.”

“So, when they get here, they have the right level of experience and they know the job they’re getting into,” he added. “And since our crews are often the ones working with them in the classroom and doing instructional activities like underground terminations and installing transformers, there’s already a relationship between these incoming apprentices and the crews.”

“No longer do I have to worry about bringing in a recent high school graduate, getting them set up in the apprentice program, training them, only to one day have them decide that this isn’t the right job for them,” he said. “By the time they leave SLCC, they know that this is what they want to do, and, importantly, they know how to do that job well.”

The SLCC partnership has moved beyond lineworkers to include the hiring of recent SLCC graduates for meter technicians, substation workers, and communications staff. “This connection has been big for our electric operations,” added Labbé.

LUS’ partnership with postsecondary education also extends to the local university, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. In previous years, LUS has partnered with the university on student solar projects, including sending teams to compete in the Department of Energy’s Solar Decathlon. LUS has also relied on the engineering program at UL to bring in interns, many of whom have continued as full-time employees.

There have also been initial discussions with UL about bringing in some LUS staff members to teach in the engineering program, though they are still working out the specifics on how that might work.

“Doing my job would be extremely difficult without all these partnerships,” Labbé said. “I’d never want to go back to how it was when we were trying to do all this alone.”

“And we’re proud to have one of the top-performing schools in our state, with kids coming from all areas of the state just to come to our schools and then getting jobs. We can’t hire them all, CLECO can’t hire them all, SLEMCO can’t hire them all, but we have found jobs for every single one of the graduates so far. That’s one of the things I’m most proud of.”

PSE Power System Engineering

Forward-Thinking Solutions for Business, Infrastructure and Technology

- Economics, Rates & Load Forecasting
- Renewable Energy Services
- Distribution & Transmission Planning
- Custom Control Panels
- Substation Design & Line Design
- Communication, Technology & Automation

FULL SERVICE CONSULTANTS
866-825-8895

Visit our website and find an expert today!
www.powersystem.org

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

BY SARAH MATHIAS, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR, AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

With the new elective pay energy tax incentives and significant new federal grants and loans, it is an exciting time for public power utilities seeking to build new generation or improve the resilience and reliability of their systems.

These exciting opportunities, however, are not without challenges. From identifying the right opportunities for your utility to navigating the application process and requirements that come with federal dollars, pursuing federal funding can be overwhelming and frustrating, particularly for smaller public power utilities or those that have never sought federal funding before.

Thankfully, many options exist for public power utilities to partner, whether on grant applications or federally funded projects. Partnering can reduce the challenges associated with seeking federal funding and increase the chances of successful applications.

STATE PARTNERSHIPS

Over half of the infrastructure dollars included in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will go directly to states to be dispersed

to eligible entities. Whether it is the millions of dollars that have already flowed to states to build out electric vehicle charging stations through the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program, or the \$580.5 million that has gone to states, tribes, and territories under the Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grant program (see map on page 20), there are many opportunities to leverage from your state.

Reach out to your governor's office, state energy office, or state transportation office to see what opportunities there are for your utility to partner with your state on federally funded projects. While states are already receiving federal funding, many of the IIJA programs are multi-year, so states are both issuing sub-grants right now and planning for future funding opportunities.

UTILITY PARTNERSHIPS

Public power is no stranger to working together. From storm recovery to state and federal advocacy, we know that we are stronger when we work together. The same mindset can be helpful when approaching federal funding opportunities.

Now is the time to think about how your utility could leverage federal or state dollars, particularly if there are opportunities on your project or application for you to partner with other utilities in your state or region. Beyond working with other local utilities, consider partnering with other public power utilities from around the country that are hoping

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

to implement similar solutions to resilience or cybersecurity challenges. From community groups and listservs to in-person and virtual events, the American Public Power Association can help you facilitate the conversations that will lead to effective partnerships.

VENDOR PARTNERSHIPS

Most, if not all, federal funding opportunities will require a major purchase — whether software or hardware — designed to make your system smarter, more secure, more reliable, or more resilient. That means it is not only in your best interest, but also in the best interest of your trusted vendors and partners, for your federal funding applications to succeed.

APPA has two options to help you partner with vendors. First, a great place to start your search is the Public Power Suppliers Guide, where you can find vendors that offer grant services, from grant writing and management to the technology solutions needed to fulfill grant objectives. Second, APPA members can make requests directly of APPA's corporate

members through the "Federal Funding Assistance Request Form," which is a great way to share your utility's specific needs and receive responses from interested and available vendors.

Many companies are creating resources or offering assistance to help their clients secure federal funding. You should inquire about how a potential project partner can assist you, from project templates to grant writing tips and tricks. Don't forget that vendor partners can also be a way to build utility partnerships and multiple utilities working with one grant writer or technology provider could reduce their individual cost and create a single grant application with wide-ranging benefits to multiple communities — a win-win for the grantees and the grantors!

However you decide to approach the federal funding opportunities available to public power, APPA is here to help. Members can visit www.PublicPower.org/InfrastructureFunding to view a compilation of resources and information to help utilities seeking to leverage federal funding opportunities to build more resilient, reliable, and secure communities.

**Energizing Change:
Energy & Climate Justice**

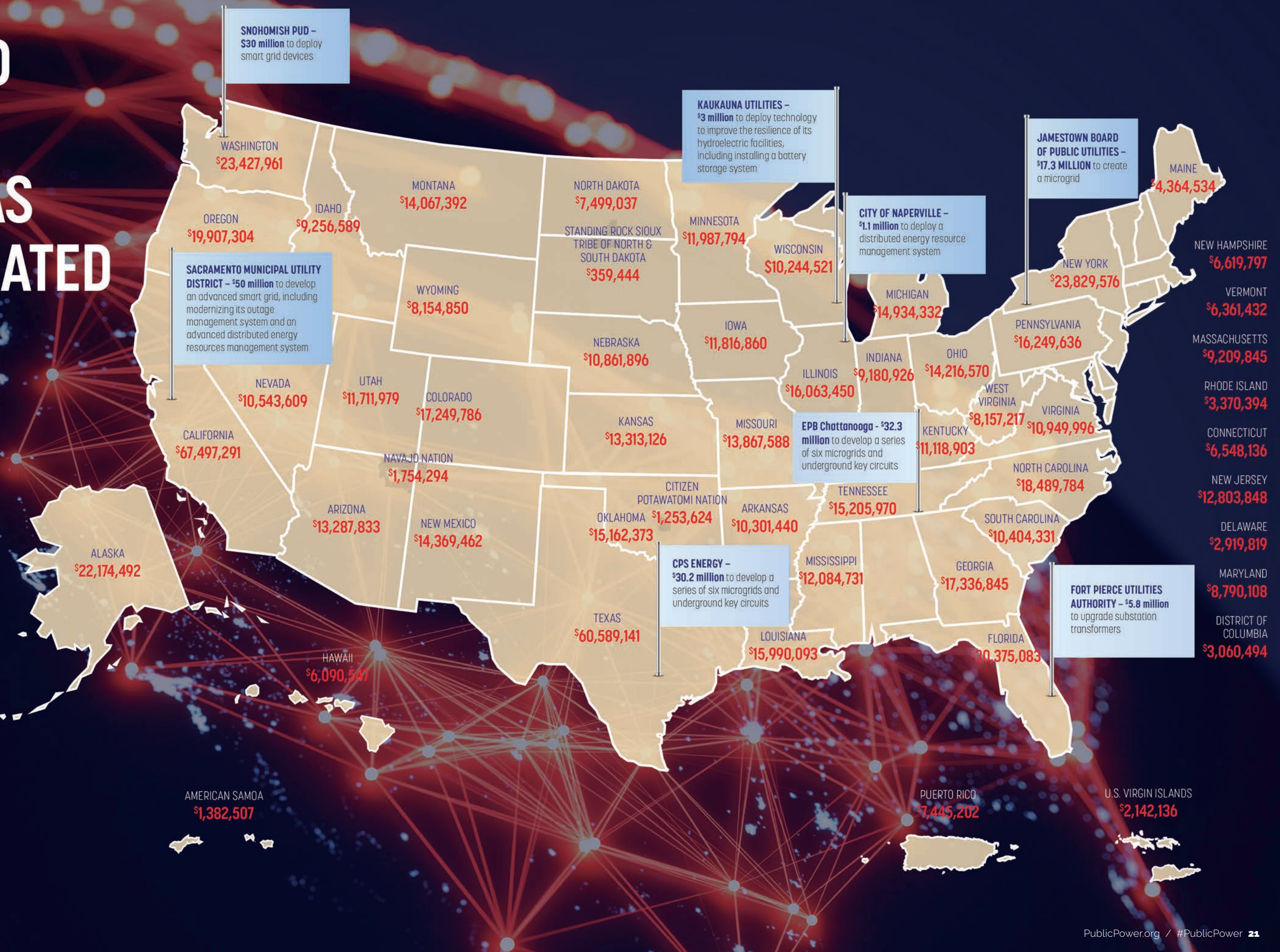
At FedsprouT, we lead the way in crafting winning government proposals that drive real change. Our community benefits experts specialize in devising strategies to tackle critical issues, from high energy costs to environmental concerns. We're here to transform your vision into impactful proposals. **Discover our proven 3-step process** for building robust community benefits plans and strengthen your proposals today.

FEDSPROUT
www.fedsprouT.com | 1-844-394-7268 | contact@fedsprouT.com

WHERE GRID RESILIENCE FUNDING HAS BEEN ALLOCATED

A quick look at the funding allocated to states, territories, and tribes for the **Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grants**, a program authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. As of September 2023, the Department of Energy has awarded more than \$748 million to these jurisdictions to strengthen and modernize America's power grid against wildfires, extreme weather, and other natural disasters.

The DOE also announced up to \$3.5 billion in cost sharing for 58 projects in the **Grid Resilience and Innovation Program**, including 12 public power projects.



CO-CREATING THE FUTURE WITH UTILITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

BY JOHN EGAN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Public power utilities put time and effort into community partnerships. That might not seem surprising, given that these utilities are owned by the communities they serve. But this shared commitment can be expressed in interesting and different ways and sometimes pays off in surprising ways. Amid economic uncertainty, as the electric sector decarbonizes and prices rise, it's more important than ever that customer-owners see that public power utilities are actively engaged in local issues. Collaborating with community-based groups can help utilities to connect with customers on programs, take meaningful steps toward developing the local workforce, and further contribute to local quality of life.



CREDIBILITY ON SUSTAINABILITY

The future may be electric, but it's not going to happen by itself. Reaching a decarbonized electric future requires utilities to partner with like-minded organizations.

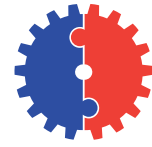
Belmont Light in Massachusetts has known that for years. Since about 2015, it has partnered with two local organizations with overlapping memberships — Belmont Goes Solar and Sustainable Belmont — to promote rooftop solar, electric vehicles, and electric heat pumps, said Craig Spinale, Belmont's general manager.

"We have a strategic plan to be a leader on climate change," he said, adding that partnering with like-minded groups gives the community-owned utility extra credibility when it talks about sustainability.

And members of those groups have supported electric price increases that have been necessary as Belmont decarbonized its electricity supply. The utility, which provides electricity to about 12,000 customers just outside Boston, owns no generation. Rather, its power supply comes from bilateral power-supply contracts and the purchase of renewable energy credits. These purchases add up to a 100% carbon-free power supply.

Belmont Light employees volunteer at events to promote EVs, rooftop solar, and electric heat pumps.

The local sustainability groups collaborated with Belmont Light to sponsor EV ride and drive events at local car dealerships starting in 2016, said Aidan Leary, manager of customer care, marketing, and communications for the utility. "We get added credibility from those events, and the groups get another way to get out their message about the importance of EVs," he said.



"It's so important to think about what strategic interests you may share with community groups, establish trust, and then get out there and make it happen."

CRAIG SPINALE
GENERAL MANAGER
BELMONT LIGHT, MASSACHUSETTS

Leary said the partnerships evolved organically from the utility's involvement in electric safety presentations at preschools and from staffing booths at farmers markets, where staffers gathered signatures from people interested in learning more about EVs.

"After we held an event to promote rooftop solar in 2016, we asked ourselves, 'What could be next?' and we approached sustainability groups to see if they would be interested in co-creating a plan to boost sustainability."

They were. Pretty soon, there were weekly conference calls that led to monthly ride and drive events at dealerships.

"It all was driven by a shared vision about sustainability and building electrification," said Spinale. Belmont Light covers event planning and marketing costs but sends no funds to the groups.

Leary estimated he spends less than 25% of his work year on activities relating to these partnerships. Out-of-pocket costs are less than 1% of the utility's operating budget and are mostly for food at events, lawn signs, and other event-marketing activities. He also posts to

social media and other free sites about the ride and drive events and other partnership-related activities.

"On my way to work, I drive past the headquarters of two investor-owned utilities. Both complexes are gated, completely closed off from the community. Public power utilities can't be like that. We need to be out in the community, telling our story," said Leary.

"It's so important to think about what strategic interests you may share with community groups, establish trust, and then get out there and make it happen," commented Spinale. "You must work to break down walls and build bridges."

He recommended community-owned utilities avoid taking a "not invented here" mindset: "Be open to new ideas and potential mutually beneficial relationships. Your partners may have some ideas and approaches you might not have considered. Most importantly, share credit with your partnering groups."



SPREADING KINDNESS

Connecting with community organizations doesn't have to be a long-term or highly formal engagement. Sometimes, it's about recognizing the ways your utility can support groups that uphold values that are key to your community's identity.

You've probably heard about "Midwestern Nice," the warm vibe evident in the heartland, where the people are said to be friendlier and more welcoming than in other parts of the country. In this nook of niceness, the Kindness Committee was born.

In Oconto Falls, Wisconsin, a rural community about 30 miles north of Green Bay, students at Oconto Falls High School created the Kindness Committee a few years ago to promote kindness throughout their school and community.

Members of the Oconto Falls High School Kindness Committee receive the donation from OFMU. Photo courtesy Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities

Members of this group hand out freeze pops to students on the last day of school, make treats for the police, firefighters, and EMTs, create and deliver get-well cards for children in hospitals, bring donuts to nurses, post kind messages in their school, collect funds to help victims of a downtown fire, and in various other ways provide a little extra care to students and members of the community.

In late 2022, when employees at Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities got together to discuss innovative ways to help their community on Public Power Day of Giving, someone suggested a bratwurst-grilling fest to raise money for the Kindness Committee so the group could expand its activities.

"We were looking to do something different, and we wanted to help a new organization," commented Greg Kuhn, OFMU's general manager. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, we organized several food drives, but participation was declining. Our community's needs were not."

"We live and work in a small, rural town of about 3,000 people," added Beth Rank, OFMU's senior utility clerk. "Everyone knows everyone, and there are a lot of low-income families in the community. We wanted to help a local organization that was doing good things."

In June 2023, on Public Power's Day of Giving, Kuhn worked two grills in front of the local Iverson's Piggly Wiggly grocery store. The brats were priced at \$2.50 each. Shoppers gobbled them up on their way in and out of the store. Over 300 brats were sold, and \$1,000 was collected.



“As community-owned utilities, we need to continually reach out and give back to the community. By getting involved, we can distinguish ourselves from shareholder-owned utilities.”

GREG KUHN
GENERAL MANAGER
OCONTO FALLS MUNICIPAL UTILITIES,
WISCONSIN

“Brat-fry events are pretty common in Wisconsin. In retrospect, holding a brat fry in rural Wisconsin was almost a no-brainer,” said Kuhn.

The brat fry involved all eight OFMU employees. Rank partnered with the utility’s customer service manager to prep the brats and buns and restock the condiments. Lineworkers delivered brats to people who couldn’t get to the store.

“I spent four hours on the grill, and by the end of the event I was covered in grease,” Kuhn said with a chuckle. “But I also was really happy and proud. ‘Midwest Nice’ is a real thing, but we found a way to take it to another level.”

Rank said the brat fry was a “rousing success,” and that the students were “astonished” when they came to pick up the \$1,000 check. The Kindness Committee thanked the utility in a message on its Facebook page.



Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities employees during the brat fry. Photo courtesy Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities.

The biggest challenge, Kuhn recalled, was getting the word out to the community before the event. He said the event was an opportunity to demonstrate to the community what OFMU values. “As community-owned utilities, we need to continually reach out and give back to the community. By getting involved, we can distinguish ourselves from shareholder-owned utilities.”

OFMU will participate in Public Power Day of Giving in June 2024, but it may try a different type of event or select a different group to receive the proceeds, Kuhn said. “We want to spread the wealth.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2023 SMART ENERGY PROVIDER DESIGNEES

We salute your commitment to prioritizing energy efficiency, distributed generation, renewable energy, and environmental initiatives as you provide affordable and reliable electric service to your communities.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anaheim Public Utilities, California | Columbus Utilities, Wisconsin | Lansing Board of Water & Light, Michigan | Norway Dept. of Power and Light, Michigan |
| Austin Energy, Texas | Crystal Falls Electric Department, Michigan | Lincoln Electric System, Nebraska | Norwich Public Utilities, Connecticut |
| Belmont Light, Massachusetts | Danvers Electric, Massachusetts | Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments, Massachusetts | Oconomowoc Utilities, Wisconsin |
| Borough of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania | Elk River Municipal Utilities, Minnesota | Lodi Utilities, Wisconsin | Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities, Wisconsin |
| Bowling Green Municipal Utilities, Ohio | EPB, Tennessee | Mason PUD 3, Washington | River Falls Municipal Utilities, Wisconsin |
| Braintree Electric Light Department, Massachusetts | Fayetteville Public Works Commission, North Carolina | Menasha Utilities, Wisconsin | Salt River Project, Arizona |
| CDE Lightband, Tennessee | Florence Utilities, Wisconsin | Middleborough Gas & Electric Department, Massachusetts | Santee Cooper, South Carolina |
| Cedar Falls Utilities, Iowa | Fort Collins Utilities, Colorado | Moorhead Public Service, Minnesota | Silicon Valley Power, California |
| Cedarburg Light & Water Utility, Wisconsin | Guam Power Authority, Guam | Muscatine Power and Water, Iowa | Snohomish PUD, Washington |
| City of Ames Electric Services, Iowa | Holland Board of Public Works, Michigan | Nebraska Public Power District, Nebraska | Stoughton Utilities, Wisconsin |
| City of Independence Power & Light, Missouri | Holyoke Gas & Electric, Massachusetts | New Braunfels Utilities, Texas | Stowe Electric Dept., Vermont |
| City of Longmont Power & Communications, Colorado | Jefferson Utilities, Wisconsin | New London Utilities, Wisconsin | Sun Prairie Utilities, Wisconsin |
| City of Naperville - Electric Utility, Illinois | Kaukauna Utilities, Wisconsin | New Richmond Utilities, Wisconsin | Tacoma Power, Washington |
| City of Tallahassee, Florida | Kissimmee Utility Authority, Florida | New York Power Authority, New York | Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant, Massachusetts |
| City of Wadsworth Electric and Communications, Ohio | Lake Mills Light & Water, Wisconsin | | Two Rivers Utilities, Wisconsin |
| City of Westerville, Ohio | | | Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department, Massachusetts |
| City Utilities Richland Center, Wisconsin | | | Waunakee Utilities, Wisconsin |
| Clark Public Utilities, Washington | | | Wilson Energy, North Carolina |
| Colorado Springs Utilities, Colorado | | | |



EFFICIENT SMART SUSTAINABLE

SHOWCASING OPTIONS

Pasco, Washington, is one of many economically challenged communities across the country.

“Our community has a significant agricultural presence, and we were hit hard by COVID. Even before the pandemic, we had higher rates of poverty than the surrounding communities, and COVID made it worse,” said Rosario Viera, the public information officer for Franklin Public Utility District, which serves about 29,000 customers in the predominantly Hispanic community.

“The high cost of college means a four-year degree isn’t an option for many,” she said. But the utility needs lineworkers, and the community needs mechanics. So, as COVID-19 gradually receded in the rearview mirror, Franklin PUD expanded its traditional school electric safety presentations. This included having Dave Montelongo, a bilingual journeyman lineworker, talk up the benefits of working at the local utility, speaking to the students in Spanish.

“Electric reliability has risen to the point where you no longer need to stockpile flashlights and candles,” Viera observed. “But we wanted to tell students why that doesn’t just happen. We wanted to show them that what we do connects directly to their lives — it enables them to recharge their cell phone and stream their favorite shows. We wanted to show them why their electricity was always on and say they could be part of that.”

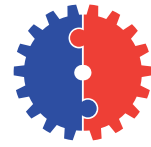
It’s working. Montelongo was a particular hit at the utility’s recent “Careers at Franklin PUD” day.

Viera recalled, “Kids were saying, ‘Hey, he looks like me. He talks like me. Maybe I could do what he does.’ You can’t underestimate the power of that moment of connection.”

The high school career day was followed by a job-shadowing day where four students followed Montelongo around for a day, watching what he does.

“Just because a four-year college degree isn’t in your future doesn’t mean you can’t do something meaningful for your community,” Viera said in an interview. “Show me a utility that is not in search of lineworkers. And we need mechanics to work on our bucket trucks, too.”

Rather than rue what it didn’t have, Franklin PUD decided to use the assets it does have, including two bilingual lineworkers, two bilingual engineers, one bilingual accounts payable clerk and a variety of other dual-language speakers, including Viera, who has worked for the community-owned utility for about 18.5 years, the last 2.5 as PIO.



“Schools need quality lessons, and the community needs skilled workers, whether they are employed by the utility or not. Both partners need to be committed.”

ROSARIO VIERA
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
FRANKLIN PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT,
WASHINGTON



Franklin PUD employees participating in a community event. Photo courtesy Franklin PUD



Local high school students participate in a job shadowing day. Photo courtesy Franklin PUD.

While there’s some self-interest behind Franklin PUD’s outreach to schools, Viera said the utility would be just as happy if the students stay in the community and work at a different job once they finish school. “A career in agriculture requires some technical skills. And Pasco could use more plumbers and car mechanics, too.”

The community is building a third high school that will focus equally on vocational and traditional education curricula. Scheduled to open in 2025, Viera said the utility hopes to participate in career day fairs and job-shadowing events with its students, too.

“You need to always be connecting with the community and your customers,” she said.

The secret sauce of a successful community partnership? Communication, she said. “You start by reaching out to potential community partners, then you identify common needs and shared interests. Schools need quality lessons, and the community needs skilled workers, whether they are employed by the utility or not. Both partners need to be committed.”

In addition to planning to engage with the third high school, Viera said the utility may also start to reach out to local middle schools: “We need to start sooner with the message that it can be cool to work at your local electric utility.”

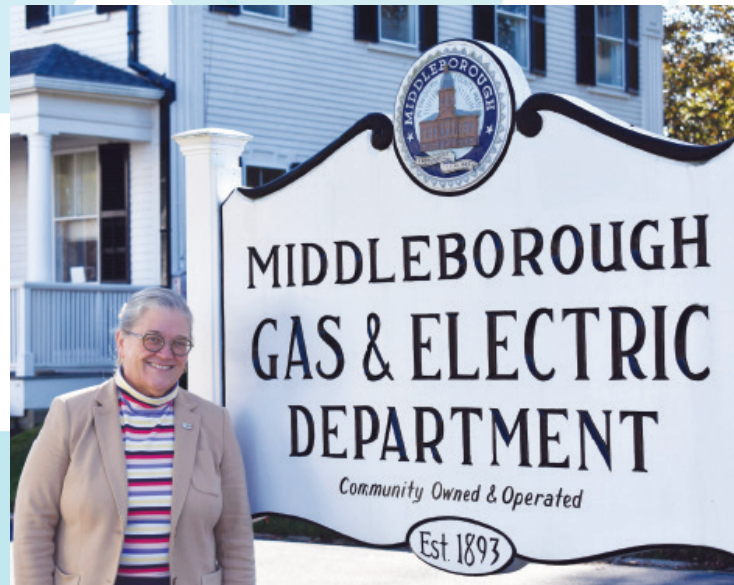
In the future, she added, Franklin PUD may send some other bilingual employees, such as engineers or information technology professionals, to schools.

Viera is the point person for Franklin PUD’s educational outreach efforts, which she estimated take 10% to 15% of her time. What has she learned from interacting with schools? “Listen to feedback from teachers and students. Read the room and be prepared to flex if the students are checked out or are getting antsy. Above all, don’t do this just to check off a box on your annual performance review. Do it because you care.”

Public Power Leaders: Jackie Crowley

A

Q&A with Jacqueline (Jackie) Crowley, who has been the General Manager for the Middleborough Gas & Electric Department in Massachusetts since 2012. She began working in the energy industry in 1987 at natural gas marketer Citizens Gas Supply before moving to Algonquin Gas Transmission and Brooklyn Union Gas to work on supply and pipeline asset optimization. In the late 1990s, Crowley took a senior origination position at Sempra Energy Trading where she worked with MGED on its natural gas and power supply portfolios. She joined MGED in 2006 as the energy supply manager, where she led advocacy and decarbonization integration initiatives. She serves as a member of the Electric Subsector Coordinating Council and the Northeast Public Power Association's Advocacy and Regulatory Committee. Crowley received NEPPA's Distinguished Service Award in 2023 and NEPPA's Person of the Year Award in 2019. A graduate of Wellesley College, she holds degrees in Anthropology and Archaeology. When she's not haranguing corporate, ISO, federal, and state officials to advocate for municipal customer needs for reliable energy supply and reasonable costs, Crowley enjoys travel, literature, and gardening.



HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK IN PUBLIC POWER?

After about 20 years in natural gas marketing, pipeline supply, and local distribution company portfolio optimization, I was working at Sempra Energy Trading facilitating natural gas and electric origination, and Middleborough Gas & Electric Department (MGED) was my customer. I worked closely with the general manager and the gas division staff on a full requirements agreement. When I relocated to Cape Cod to raise my daughter near family, Jim Collins, MGED's GM at the time, reached out to see if I was ready to leave the investor-owned utility world and embrace public service.

WHAT KEY LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM WORKING IN THIS SECTOR?

There's a great deal of satisfaction in public service and in focusing on the customer — their needs, cost impacts, and particularly on clearer communication of the challenges of our business and how it will impact the community. A high percentage of our MGED workers live in the communities we serve, and those deep connections to their neighbors and family help all staff to appreciate what is at stake every day for reliability, safety, utility bills, and our stewardship of the public power and gas systems.

IS THERE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF FROM YOUR TIME IN PUBLIC POWER?

MGED's Board of Light Commissioners and staff embraced aggressive decarbonization goals early on, and we've supported the development of local commercial and residential solar, and additions of New England solar, wind, nuclear, and hydropower while maintaining reliability and reasonable rates for an extended period. I'm proud to have initiated the establishment of a human resources group at MGED, to meet the changing needs of staff members. And we've also facilitated tuition reimbursement programs for multiple staff members to obtain MBAs, to help us weather the retirements of long-term highly skilled staff amid escalating compliance and reporting demands.

WHAT CHALLENGES SHOULD PUBLIC POWER'S FUTURE LEADERS BE PREPARED TO FACE?

Constant distractions! There are so many conflicting issues that we face every day — it's a gift to have a clear mandate to think first about the current and future needs of the customers we serve. If we keep these in mind in our operations and advocacy work, the results will have measurable benefits to share with customers and to support job satisfaction among our staff members.

A True Enterprise Experience

**Streamline Your Business.
Reduce Operational Costs. Increase Efficiency.
All With One Enterprise System.**

NISC's robust enterprise system features full integration across solutions that work across your organization.

Powerful Service, Financials, Operations and Marketing solutions can help you manage your meter data, analyze your customer data and offer payment and communication channels to increase customer satisfaction... All with one trusted partner.



www.nisc.coop
national information solutions cooperative

COLLABORATION BREEDS INNOVATION

How public power works
with others — and together —
to try new technologies

BY SUSAN PARTAIN, DIRECTOR, CONTENT STRATEGY,
AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION



A spark in the electric world is often something to be avoided, except when it comes to sparking innovative ideas or practices. Yet there can still be a hesitancy to move forward or try out an idea, technology, or process just because there hasn't been much history of its application by utilities. In working with other groups — and each other — public power providers gain insight into how to evolve their operations along with technology and customer expectations and find efficiencies along the way.

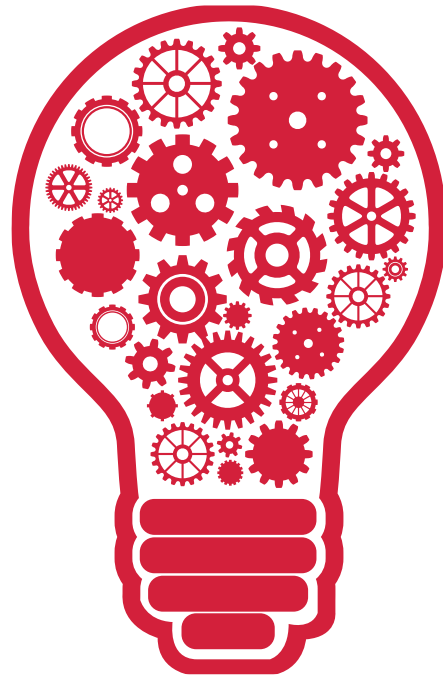
LEVERAGING JOINT ACTION

Electric resistance heaters are typically an inexpensive option for upfront costs, but quickly become among the most expensive options for space heating once in operation. This is due in part to a reduced ability to control the energy usage of resistance heaters, which are often installed in older homes. This premise is what led WPPI Energy, a joint action agency representing public power utilities in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Upper Michigan, to investigate whether deploying line voltage smart thermostats could help customers save energy during the winter.

Undertaking such a project could not be done by the JAA alone, but required involving partners along multiple levels.

“WPPI Energy is a member-led joint action agency, so the public power utilities that make up our membership play a large role in any project we take on,” said Anna Stieve, senior energy services manager at WPPI. “Their buy-in was instrumental to the success of the project. Tackling high winter utility bills, especially for low-income households, was an easy goal for such customer-focused utilities to agree on.”

Seventeen utilities signed up to participate, and in turn more than 880 thermostats were installed. Participating customers were able to save an average of 614 kilowatts per thermostat installed — around \$70 per year per thermostat. Stieve credits strong communication and having a clear, common goal for the successful collaboration.



“We saw a lot of unique and symbiotic relationships while working on this project,” noted Stieve. “WPPI member utilities have strong relationships with the landlords in their communities.”

In addition to members, WPPI's energy services managers, and customers, Stieve said that WPPI worked closely with staff at Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's statewide energy efficiency and renewable energy program.

Having these strong relationships built on trust helped encourage participation in the program. “Some landlords really bought into the program and wanted to help their tenants save money. We witnessed landlords who worked to install the technology in entire apartment complexes,” said Stieve.

“Our member utilities also have their own relationships with their customers, who include the people residing in apartment buildings.” These relationships helped support marketing the program directly to customers with electric heat. Each member is supported by a dedicated energy services manager, who helped market the project to customers in addition to providing support such as answering customer questions, setting up appointments with contractors, and gathering data.

Given the wide area covered by participating utilities, WPPI engaged with a variety of local contractors to install the LVSTs. “We found it was simpler to hire contractors who supported the technology to do the install for multiple communities. Being able to find and hire great contractors to work among various member communities was another unanticipated benefit of utilities working together,” said Stieve.

This program was a different experience for WPPI and its members, as it featured a coordinated approach to the direct installation of an emerging

“We saw a lot of unique and symbiotic relationships while working on this project.”

Anna Stieve, senior energy services manager, WPPI Energy, Wisconsin

technology for residential customers. The project was funded in part through the Demonstration of Energy and Efficiency Developments, or DEED, program at the American Public Power Association. Although this type of program is atypical for the JAA, the team sees how joint action can be suited to take on these projects.

“WPPI is well situated to help members carry out projects of this scale. Joint action agencies have the distinct advantage of bringing together member utilities of various sizes and populations to share information and make programs like this one a success,” shared Stieve. “Our members are stronger together, and, through joint action, they're able to offer more high quality, cost-effective services to the communities they serve.”

GROWING TOGETHER

In California, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District saw the opportunity to develop a solar plus storage facility to support its 2030 Zero Carbon goal, while also supporting its agricultural community. The Country Acres project is a 344-MW solar array plus a 172 MW, 4-hour battery storage system. The project also includes construction and operation of interconnection facilities, including a generation substation, switching station, and interconnection lines.

The project represents not only the largest solar facility SMUD will have developed to date, but also its first foray into agrivoltaics, which involves combining land use for both solar photovoltaics and for farming. The project will be located outside of Sacramento in Placer County, west of the City of Roseville.

“This is an area that has a lot of agriculture, so we want projects to be compatible with that,” said

Amanda Beck, a project development manager for SMUD. Beck mentioned that SMUD has established guidelines for renewable projects that have been in place for years, which outlines criteria for how to make projects compatible with the community. “We knew we would be looking at use of agricultural land. So, as we were looking at the site and those principles, we looked at how we can partner to further innovate.”

SMUD previously worked with researchers at the University of California at Davis to support a pollinator habitat on its renewable projects, specifically at its Rancho Seco II facility. Beck said this history led to the partnership with UC Davis for the agrivoltaic research at Country Acres. The UC Davis team will develop crops and study crop production on about 20 acres of the up to 1,170 acre site.

“As we were developing the project... we were able to identify a location that made sense with others' needs in mind, such as having good access to water and other needs,” noted Beck.

In addition to the partnership with UC Davis, SMUD also engaged a partner to manage the sale of energy generated from the panels under a power purchase agreement. While SMUD is the developer on the project,

handling the permitting and siting aspects, the PPA partner will construct and operate the panels and storage assets. “They will own the renewable facility and will operate it, and then underneath, SMUD will own the property, and in the middle, UC Davis will own the crops and do the research on them,” explained Beck.

The project is still in the permitting process, but SMUD has signed contracts with both UC Davis and the PPA partner to execute aspects of the project. Eric Crane, who works on regional and local government affairs for SMUD, has also been part of helping move the Country Acres project forward.

“It's an exciting opportunity for SMUD because this pilot is going to inform future projects [in agrivoltaics],” said Crane. He said the panels will be constructed at various heights, so the UC Davis team can measure the efficacy of producing different crops, while the SMUD team can see how this affects generation. Part of getting the project off the ground was to gain the support of the local agricultural community. “We had a presentation at the Placer County Agricultural Commission, where we went through the process of what agrivoltaics are, and some of the commissioners were very excited. The potential of creating microclimates under the panels that could extend the growing season by a month or two was something that really resonated with individuals that might have been hesitant to have solar going onto ag land.”

Crane noted that SMUD has had a few thousand customers in Placer County for years, and that this project helped spur efforts to better connect with stakeholders there. He pointed out the clear mutual benefits of the project, from the potential for new jobs to higher reliability for customers served.

In terms of what makes for a successful collaboration, Beck credited constant communication. “We've never stopped talking — it feels like for two years now.”

“Our workflow always includes a lot of stakeholders,” she added. “We want to be collaborative, we want to be part of the communities that we develop in. So very early on, the team worked to understand and establish a presence in our community, to understand those stakeholders, to have



meetings — not just with the decision-makers, but all the community members that wanted to talk to us. That’s key to how we work. It’s a lot — a lot of groups, a lot of meetings, but in the end, it helps to inform how we design and develop the project.”

STARTING WITH A SHARED VISION

In Washington state, Tacoma Power has been part of ongoing discussions with other utilities and energy groups throughout the Pacific Northwest on how to address common challenges in the sector, with a particular focus on conservation and efficiency. Tacoma’s involvement in groups such as the Power Council, Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, and Regional Technical Forum gave the public power utility plenty of opportunity to understand the different technology options available and what utilities can do to resolve issues with adoption or within the marketplace. According to Alan Fraser, engineering team manager at Tacoma Power, it was from a colleague’s involvement on a subgroup of RTF that Tacoma Power formed its projects on heat pump water heaters.

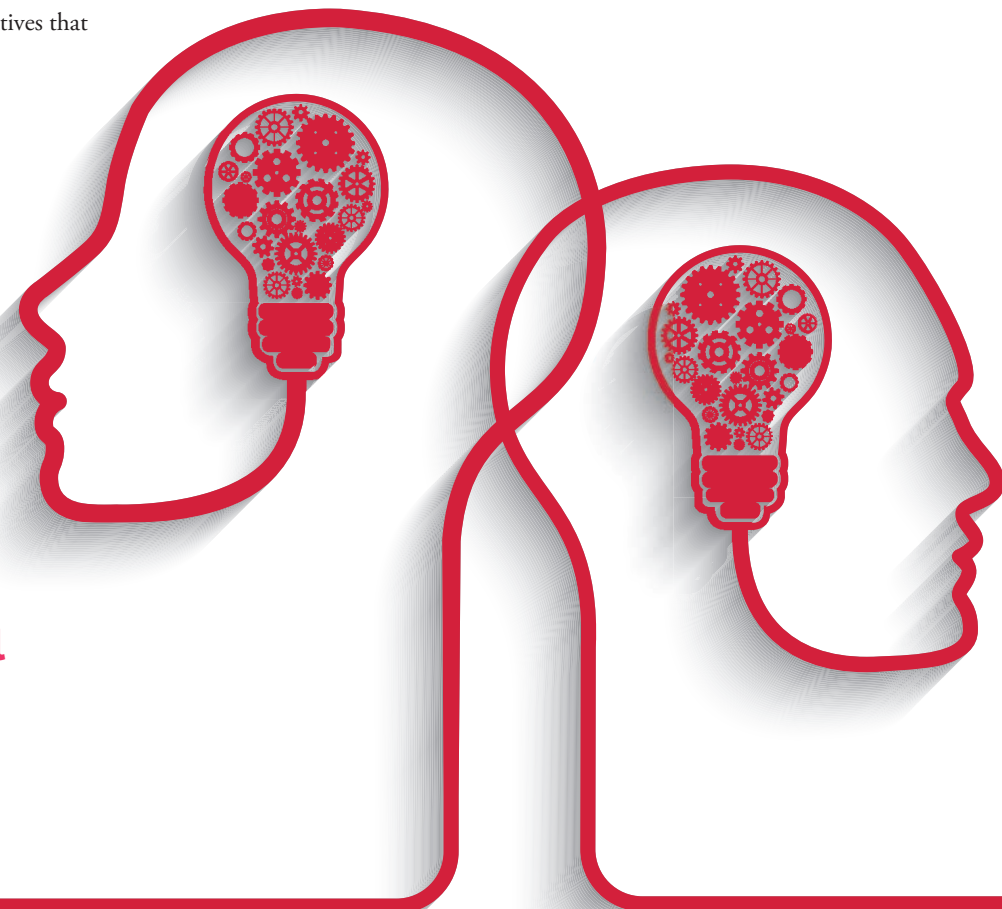
In part through funding from DEED grants and from grants from the Bonneville Power Administration, Tacoma took on two initiatives that

focused on installing centralized and commercial heat pump water heaters in multifamily buildings. The projects involved bringing together builders to install the heaters, the water heater developers, designers, and engineers. One project involved the Tacoma Housing Authority to focus on deploying the water heaters at buildings that will house individuals with lower incomes. The BPA is participating to help pay for measurement and verification of how the heaters are working – and supporting efficiency – after a year of use.

“Part of why it worked and why it worked well is that there are already a number of groups where we talk about conservation and efficiency,” said Fraser. “They had time to discuss these ideas for a while before the grant opportunity came along,” he said.

Fraser said that while there was interest in the idea from other groups, being able to bring grants and incentive funding to the table helped lower the perceived risk for builders to participate, in addition to reducing the incremental cost for the project.

Fraser said it was helpful to just start the dialogue to understand each other’s points of view. “We want resiliency, they don’t want calls about cold water,” he said.



“We want to be collaborative, we want to be part of the communities that we develop in. So very early on, the team worked to understand and establish a presence in our community, to understand those stakeholders, to have meetings — not just with the decision-makers, but all the community members that wanted to talk to us.”

Amanda Beck, project development manager, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, California

These slightly differing views did result in some changes throughout the design phase, including changing some specifications that weren’t necessarily the most energy efficient options.

From there, Fraser noted how regular check ins with the various stakeholders allowed for clarity on “who is doing what and by when.”

Fraser said a key takeaway from the projects so far is around needing more information and examples to point to of having such systems in place so that everyone can see how it works and be more comfortable with the idea. The buildings they designed around the systems will be finished in 2024, and Fraser is curious to see how the systems operate, including how much energy use is reduced.

“The person paying the bill isn’t the same as the one doing the building. It was new enough to the parties that they both wanted a backup plan.”

Fraser said the data will help all partners continue to learn from the technology, and that Tacoma anticipates needing further insight into how to handle new loads given trends in electrification.

“Part of why it worked and why it worked well is that there are already a number of groups where we talk about conservation and efficiency.”

Alan Fraser, engineering team manager, Tacoma Power, Washington

TALLMAN EQUIPMENT CO., INC.
 www.tallmanequipment.com
 877.860.5666
 EMPLOYEE OWNED

OUR SERVICES

- TOOL & EQUIPMENT SALES AND RENTAL
- TOOL REPAIR AND REFURBISHMENT
- GROUND & JUMPER SETS MANUFACTURING AND REPAIR
- TRANSFORMER SLING MANUFACTURING AND ROPE REPAIR
- FIBERGLASS TESTING, REPAIR AND REFINISHING
- RUBBER GOODS CLEANING AND TESTING

FOR THE BEST TOOLS FOR LINEMEN,
Trust **TALLMAN**

www.tallmanequipment.com
 Call Toll Free: 877-860-5666



Reducing Risk in Partnerships

When entering a collaborative venture, it isn't just the investment of resources and money that is on the line, organizations are also adding exposure to their reputations and other assets. Partnerships can help to share risk, but they also create new risk.

KNOW WHY YOU'RE PARTNERING

In a brief, University of Pennsylvania business professor Harbir Singh suggests first approaching risk in partnerships by considering which one of three strategies the partnership should take: a window strategy, options strategy, or positioning strategy. "By clearly identifying what you want to achieve through the partnership, and choosing the appropriate strategy, you can stretch your innovation dollars, share in the costs of investments, better handle uncertainty, and access new resources, capabilities, and markets."

Steps to determining which strategy to choose include looking at what goals you want to achieve with the partnership — whether that's to gain access into insights about developing technology (window strategy), try out a more diverse set of potential solutions (options strategy), or gain an advantage by aligning capabilities (positioning).

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Whether a joint venture between two people or a large-scale project between multiple enterprises, expert advice usually centers on a similar set of principles for how to mitigate risk in entering and maintaining partnerships. Here are a few high-level tips for how to create and sustain mutually beneficial partnerships, adapted from sources including contributors to the Harvard Business Review.

- Start by fully understanding your partner(s) – from what their specific expertise is to what they bring to the table and what they hope to take away from the partnership.
- Conduct a thorough risk assessment before entering into any new agreement with another party. This includes vetting any associated supply chain issues, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, or potential changes in the markets that could significantly change costs.
- Clearly delineate what role(s) each partner will play, including who is involved in making key decisions and who will be accountable for specific aspects of the work.
- Plan for contingencies. Think ahead to all the possible worst-case scenarios and spell out how such situations would be handled by creating contingency plans, which can include backup options for partners.
- Monitor and track performance. Bake in regular milestones and checkpoints to a project plan and agreements to continually check whether goals are being met or if adjustments are needed. These checkpoints could also be places where there are off ramps for a formal agreement if necessary.
- Foster trust and collaboration by being honest, transparent, and communicating regularly.
- Regularly reassess whether risks have changed and how the partnership needs to change accordingly.

Learn more about risk management in public power by joining the Risk Management Working Group. The group meets on a regular basis and discusses common challenges and concerns. Contact us for more information www.PublicPower.org/Contact.

- Understand your partner(s)
- Conduct a risk assessment
- Delineate clear roles
- Plan for contingencies
- Monitor and track performance
- Communicate regularly
- Regularly reassess risk(s)

TECH
PRODUCTS, INC.

SIGNS, TAGS & MARKERS

Everlast Pole Tags | Tech-3D Distribution Signs | Phase Markers

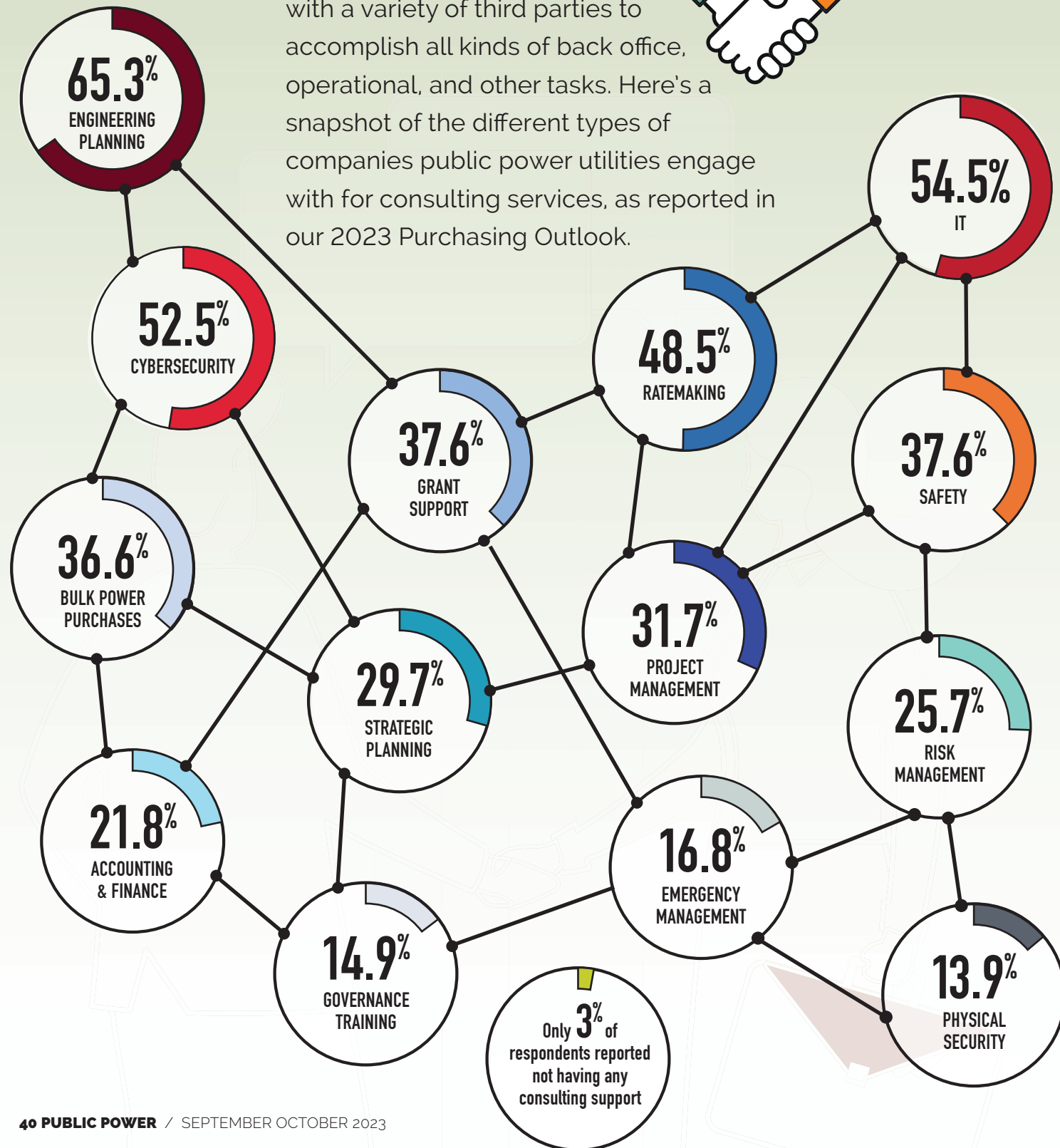
1-800-221-1311
www.TechProducts.com

MADE IN USA SINCE 1948
A VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Who Public Power Partners With

Public power utilities collaborate with a variety of third parties to accomplish all kinds of back office, operational, and other tasks. Here's a snapshot of the different types of companies public power utilities engage with for consulting services, as reported in our 2023 Purchasing Outlook.



Congratulations to the Inaugural Winners of the Public Power Customer Satisfaction Award

GOLD

- Groton Electric Light Department, Massachusetts
- Lowell Light and Power, Michigan

SILVER

- Belmont Municipal Light Department, Massachusetts
- Kerrville Public Utility Board, Texas

BRONZE

- Grand Haven Board of Light & Power, Michigan
- Kaukauna Utilities, Wisconsin
- Kissimmee Utility Authority, Florida
- Rolla Municipal Utilities, Missouri
- Sun Prairie Utilities, Wisconsin

Contact Membership@PublicPower.org to learn how your utility can qualify for this award.



LEGISLATIVE RALLY

FEBRUARY 26 - 28, 2024

WASHINGTON, DC

AMERICAN
**PUBLIC
POWER**
ASSOCIATION
Powering Strong Communities

Join us in Washington to:



Network with public power
colleagues



Learn more about policies
affecting public power



Meet with your elected
representatives

Register at PublicPower.org/LegislativeRally