

**Northwest Power & Conservation Council
Systems Integration Forum
February 19, 2021**

Introduction and Welcome

Marti Frank, Efficiency for Everyone, began the meeting at 9:00. She asked attendees to go to Menti.com to fill out a survey that describes their work. Gillian Charles, NWPCC, greeted attendees and encouraged participation. She introduced Frank and Hassan Shaban, Empower Dataworks, explaining their role at the day's meeting.

Charles then introduced Bill Edmonds, executive director, NWPCC. Edmonds welcomed attendees and thanked Council staff for putting the SIF together. He explained why DEI work is important to the Council, admitted that he is also learning and hoped to model an attitude of openness, honesty, and a bit of awkwardness.

Edmonds explained why DEI work matters to the Council, noting the desire to attract and retain top-notch talent that creates a strong organization and understanding the impacts of Council work on everyone in the diverse Region. Edmonds listed three internal goals:

1. Adopt an inclusion statement to drive future work
2. Consider and adopt best practices in other key functions
3. Develop a concrete and challenging work plan to guide future work.

He asked attendees to consider this framing question, "What does an equitable energy system look like?" Edmonds said the answer will lay a foundation for the Council members to consider.

Overview of the Day

Shaban presented goals for the day, which included defining near-, medium- and long-term goals. He defined Council staff work and set ground rules for participation.

Chad Madron, NWPCC, explained how to engage with Go-to-Webinar and how to switch to Go-to-Meeting for breakout groups. Frank then reviewed the day's agenda.

ENERGY EQUITY 101

Key Terms & Concepts

Frank explained why equity terms are important and empowering. She referenced the [Equity Terms and Definitions handout](#) and discussed widely-known terms within the industry including energy burden, environmental justice, and BIPOC and lesser-known terms like frontline community, energy justice, and just transition as well. She also discussed little known terms like procedural equity and distributive equity.

Frank brought other terms to the group's attention, clustering them for greater understanding. She then singled out familiar, descriptive terms used in the energy industry and juxtaposed

them with terms used by groups to describe themselves. Frank then challenged attendees to use the second group of terms in their work.

ENVISIONING AN EQUITABLE ENERGY SYSTEM

Shaban explained where a DEI framework belongs in the industry's mandate to deliver safe, reliable, and affordable power to all customers, putting the answer into four buckets.

1. A sense of fairness and justice.
2. Public relations
3. Positive financial outcomes
4. Customer satisfaction

Shaban then asked attendees to put their ideas into the questions box. Answers from attendees included:

- Personal impetus and/or transformation, and crisis reaction
- Economic development: better education better jobs
- Innovative and effective solutions to problems
- Something between "sense of fairness" and "positive financial outcomes" like positive social outcomes/aggregate social benefits.
- Community uplift

Shaban then pointed to a poll where attendees could rank the importance of these drivers. He voiced surprise at how popular "a sense of fairness/justice" ranked. Shaban then reviewed responses to an earlier question about equity vision, noting five themes ranked at the top: affordability, clean energy, housing quality, inclusion of energy justice communities, and reliability.

Shaban then sorted answers into three buckets of stakeholder jobs and found two commonalities: energy affordability and the need for clean energy.

FRAMING THE DAY'S CONVERSATION

The Council's Purview & Activities

Ben Kujala, NWPCC

Kujala reviewed what the Council does and how it works. He touched on how staff develop power plans and what the Power Act says about equity.

Kujala showed early model results to discuss upcoming challenges to the power grid and discussed next steps.

Frank summarized comments and questions, saying there were questions about the tension between least cost and equity goals. She called this a fruitful area for exploration. She then pointed to several questions about "acceptable risk and who determines it."

Shaban then asked about strategies as we move to a world where it is cheaper to generate renewable energy than save energy through efficiency. Kujala quoted statistician George Box,

saying “all models are wrong; some are useful.” He used the quote to illustrate the importance of understanding the limits of modeling, adding that not understanding these limitations can lead to bad decision making.

Kujala then said the results are telling us something about the future of the grid, the way the energy systems are evolving and evolving technologies. He said energy efficiency has been fundamental to the region and these results should spur conversations about new challenges and perspectives.

BREAK

Seeing the Forest for the Trees: Tactical and Structural Barriers to Equity in our Energy System

Shaban reviewed survey results about barriers to equity and explained how systems thinking can address large, regional issues by getting at root causes.

Shaban conducted a Q&A with Nicolas Garcia, WPUDA to illustrate the point. He started by explaining how the virtual whiteboard works and used the question, “Why isn’t energy affordable for everyone?” as an example. Garcia provided several answers while Shaban wrote them on virtual sticky notes and placed them near the appropriate root.

Shaban then prompted Garcia to talk about other root-cause challenges. He then sent attendees to breakout rooms to do their [own virtual whiteboards](#). Council Staff then shared breakout results.

Tina Jayaweera, NWPCC, discussed the Demand Response results saying there were a lot of cross-cutting ideas. She said the main question was “why do lower-income and BIPOC communities find it difficult to participate in DR programs?” She said the group spent a lot of time on program-related issues and the role of communication. Jayaweera noted comments about lack of trust between the public and workforce, including contractors. Shaban noted a few digital divide issues as well.

Gillian Charles, NWPCC, discussed the Generating Resources/Natural Gas results, saying their main question was, “Why is energy infrastructure often located in lower income, BIPOC communities?” Charles noted that most discussion centered on Regulation/Policies/Statures adding that these communities have less time and resources to dedicate to this issue. She also pointed to a lack of necessary data to solve Resource Planning Methodologies issues.

Ben Kujala, NWPCC, summarized the Resource Adequacy/Systems Analysis results. The main question was, “Why are lower income and BIPOC communities less resilient to grid emergencies?” He noted that the sticky note that generated the most conversation stated that utilities are often governed by laws, regulations, and guardrails that are prescriptive, limit how they can plan, and don’t take equity into consideration.

Shaban asked why there were no stickies under Program-Related Issues. Kujala suspected time limitations were the cause.

Kevin Smit, NWPCC, discussed results from the Conservation/Energy Efficiency group and their question, “Why do many lower income, BIPOC households not participate in efficiency programs?” He noted a theme around tensions between low rates and robust programs. Smit discussed cost-effectiveness, saying there are different ways to look at cost effectiveness. He noted stakeholder comments that truly and fully included all of the benefits would be more equitable.

Frank noted commonalities across all of the groups which included:

- Trust
- Customer relationship with their utility
- The mindset of the energy industry workforce
- Methodologies and inputs to calculate cost effectiveness
- Regulation and policy that can limit movement
- Time constraints to participation

LUNCH

THE EQUITY TOOLBOX: DATA, PROCESSES & TOOLS

Shaban welcomed attendees after lunch and teed up the afternoon’s topic: [The Equity Toolbox: Data, Processes & Tools to Facilitate Equity Thinking](#). Frank introduced three guest speakers: Tony Reames, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, Lisa Abbott, Organizing Director, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, and Emeka Anyanwu, Energy Innovation & Resources Officer, Seattle City Light.

She framed the question for the afternoon’s efforts as, “What can we do to incorporate equity into the Region’s power planning to make the process and outcomes more equitable?”

Frank called on Dr. Reames to discuss baselines and equity metrics. Dr. Reames talked about his work and stressed the importance of place when implementing energy programs. He reported finding value in shut off and arrears data.

Frank referenced the huge lift to pull data from multiple sources and complimented Dr. Reames work at the [Urban Energy Justice Lab](#). She then asked him to provide some background about the project. Dr. Reames talked about creating national partnerships with the goal of standardizing the approach to energy equity metrics.

Dr. Reames laid out his equity energy vision noting energy generation overburden experienced by some communities that is not balanced by consumption. He visioned a just system where the benefits and burdens are shared, or the burden is removed entirely.

Frank then greeted [Abbott](#) to discuss the decision-making process and conducting meaningful, authentic public engagement. Frank referenced the [Empower Kentucky Plan](#), calling it detailed and actionable. Frank dove into the public engagement process Abbott used to create this document.

Abbott laid out the process which included interviews, six community dinner conversations and a two-day conference.

Frank asked Abbott why public input is important in energy planning. Abbott pointed to three answers:

1. Justice, “nothing about us without us.”
2. Better outcomes drawn from new ideas and perspectives
3. A just transition to a clean energy future is ultimately about political power

Frank said this resonates with the morning’s conversation about structural barriers like regulatory and legislative road blocks in power planning. Frank then acknowledged the difficulties of public engagement and asked Abbott to talk about her challenges. Abbott said a large challenge is identifying, recruiting, and supporting needed voices, pointing to barriers like the need for transportation, childcare and language interpretation.

She called this work ongoing and challenging. Abbott said the dinner conversations were not about extracting knowledge but more about hosting conversations and learning from their richness. She also said the process was not a “one-off” but an ongoing, building effort. Abbott spoke of a theater piece that was performed at the dinner that helped educate and inspire and a slide show designed to explain Kentucky’s changing energy environment through personal stories and art.

Frank then asked Abbott to envision her equitable energy system. Abbott used a story to illustrate her vision. She spoke about a fourth-generation coal miner who retrained as an energy efficiency installation specialist. She said he installed a solar-powered water purification system on the roof of the [Kingdom Living Temple](#) in Florence, SC where environmental activist [Reverend Leo Woodberry](#) works.

Frank then addressed Anyanwu to discuss Seattle City Light’s approach and asked about policies that foreground equity. Anyanwu referenced Seattle’s long history of centering racial equity and the gaps of what that looks like on the ground. He said it’s not how to avoid recreating inequities but looking for and committing to opportunities that reverse effects and uplift communities that have been harmed by inequities over the years.

Frank asked about the energy and transportation planning happening in Washington’s Duwamish Valley. Anyanwu pointed to Dr. Reames earlier comments about the importance of place-based thinking, saying the Duwamish Valley is a part of Seattle that has a long, layered history of inequity. He said transit is very impactful for this area so SCL made transit a priority

there. He also spoke of equaling the benefits and burden so efforts in the Duwamish Valley will not create displacement.

Frank said not thinking about displacement in advance could create an unintended consequence. She asked where market forces would naturally site services like storm restoration and underground infrastructure if an intentional stake was not put in the ground, like in the Duwamish Valley. Anyanwu said storm restoration normally tries to get power back to the most people in the least amount of time. He added that this seemingly benign approach belies the neediest people who bear the heaviest impacts.

Anyanwu then talked about [Local Improvement Districts](#) that use surcharges to help pay for services like underground infrastructure. He stated that people who can pay a surcharge are in a certain economic class, noting that continuing on the same path will not deliver equity.

Frank asked Anyanwu to discuss [Seattle's racial equity toolkit](#). Anyanwu called it a prompter to ask difficult questions and define outcomes, find stakeholders, identify benefits and burdens and influence messaging.

Anyanwu laid out his equitable energy system vision, saying it takes many layers from emissions impacts to economic impacts into account with the goal of reversing marginalizing effects.

[Breakout Groups Share Out using the Mural Tool](#)

The guest speakers joined attendees in three breakout groups to brainstorm what potential solutions the Council and the region could do to increase energy equity, using the data, process, and tools framework.

Conservation/Demand Forecasting

Smit reported that a wide range of ideas were discussed. He noted that the group identified difficulties with data that include confidentiality issues or cumbersome packaging. Smit said the group identified NEEA as a possible resource for data issues as well as other, lesser used organizations like universities.

Smit moved to process, saying the group liked Abbott's "dinner conversation" approach and thought it could be incorporated into the power planning process. The group discussed the gap between the Council and end-users.

At the tools section, Smit said SCL shared insights with their tool kit. He said there was discussion about adding equity values to the cost/benefit calculation as a way to move the needle, noting that "least-cost" may not be the best metric.

Steve Simmons, NWPCC, reported on the work in the Generating Resources/Natural Gas group saying there was a lot of ideas. For process, he identified "timing" as a common theme, noting the Council's long planning process creates narrow windows for important, initial inputs. Simmons said one data topic was the impacts of electrification, noting they can be very

different from community to community. He said some communities may not have the infrastructure to turn electrify a gas-heated residence.

For tools, Simmons reported a desire to expand tools and resolution. He noted there are confidentiality issues here and in the data section.

John Ollis, NWPCC, reported on the Demand Response/Resource Adequacy/Systems Analysis group saying there were many cross-cutting thoughts. He addressed the different equity metrics in tools saying the group called for different, less-broad data sources and metrics to reach the right communities.

He addressed data, saying there was much discussion on equity data and how to get it. Ollis reported that Dr. Reames suggested a “Yelp-style” review of customer responses and stories. Ollis said data privacy and trust were also deeply discussed.

For process, Ollis reported “finding the right stakeholders” as a key finding.

Frank moved to [closing thoughts and next steps](#). Shaban said there will be a high-level action plan created from the day’s work. He pointed to a closing poll to help further inform that effort. Shaban said there will be more opportunities for further feedback as well.

Edmonds said he found the equity terms and definitions very helpful. He also reported feeling surprise by issues revealed in the first exercise on process work. Edmonds singled out trust and time constraints as particularly revealing.

Charles agreed that this work requires time, energy, and effort. She noted that the first critical thinking exercise was very illuminating and wanted to apply that “get to the root causes” thinking to her own DEI work. She was also inspired by Dr. Reames data work and wondered how a similar organization could function in the Northwest.

Jayaweera reiterated past comments about the amount and quality of learnings. She said she appreciated learning about work happening in other regions from the afternoon’s guest speakers and hearing from local groups that are not often present at Council work.

Jayaweera thanked participants, calling this is the beginning of a hard journey. She noted the 2021 Power Plan will be out in a few months and there will be an attempt to incorporate some of the day’s findings.

The meeting closed at 2:30.

Companies and Organizations Represented

152 individuals attended the day’s event total including Council staff. They represented:

Bonneville

Clark PUD

Tacoma Power

CLEAResult

PNNL	Clatskanie PUD	Avista Corp	NEEA
PPC	Cowlitz PUD	RMI	Snohomish PUD
Oregon DOE	Cadeo Group	Teague Consulting	ACEEE
UCONS	Seattle City Light	WPUDA	Puget Sound Energy
PacifiCorp	WA UTC	NW Energy Coalition	Cadmus Group
KL Gates	Clallam PUD	PNUCC	Lighthouse Energy
Montana	Idaho Power	Better Climate	Chelan PUD
PGE	Energy Trust	Guide House	Lewis and Clark
Waypoint Energy	Illume Advising	Northwestern	EPA
EWEB	WA Dept of Com	Western Energy Board	OR PUC
NRDC	ANWS	Benton PUD	Camp Black Dog
CNGC	NRU-NW	independents	