

Voices of Experience Addressing Equity

A U.S. Department of Energy Initiative

Inventory of Utility Community Engagement and Energy
Equity Efforts

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Smart Electric
Power Alliance



Advanced Grid
Research
OFFICE OF ELECTRICITY
US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

 **NREL**
Transforming ENERGY

Research Objectives

Explore utilities' community engagement activities, and whether/how utilities pursue energy equity

Identify an exploratory sample of 57 relevant initiatives via web search for utility documentation that:

- Represent a range of utility types, sizes, regions and range of programs/initiatives
- Did not emphasize low- to moderate-income programs in the review–note: cost-saving and bill assistance programs are a critical element of equity, but are already well-documented.

Classify community engagement and equity activities using existing frameworks

Analyze the sample of initiatives to identify emerging trends and opportunities in:

- Customer and Community Engagement
- Procedural Justice
- Distributional Justice
- Recognition Justice



Research Parameters and Notes

Web Search Limitations:

- The websearch is limited to public documents. It's likely that many other activities are happening, but not well-documented online
- The websearch takes an exploratory approach. While the dataset and findings are not meant to be comprehensive or statistically-valid, they do reveal trends that can be studied further.

Utility and Regional Differences:

- Use of terminology around utility equity activities is not consistent across the U.S.
- Investor-owned utilities (IOUs), electric distribution cooperatives, and public power utilities all have different regulatory directives, reporting requirements and guidelines around "equity-oriented" initiatives and programs.
- Since rural cooperative utilities serve the majority of the low income population in the U.S., they often do not make distinctions between traditional activities versus equity activities.



Consistent Definitions and Terminology

Community Engagement: Deliberate work with members of the local community or specific community groups to share information, gather and use feedback, or plan and implement activities.

Procedural Justice: Ensuring that community voices are invited and embedded in the design, implementation, and evaluation of energy programs and policies. Processes should be inclusive, accessible, and authentic, leading to diverse engagement, participation, and representation.

Distributional Justice: Fairly distributing benefits and reducing harms and burdens across all segments of a community, prioritizing those with the greatest need, vulnerability, or burden.

Recognition Justice: Making decisions and taking action in recognition of the historical, cultural, and institutional structures that have advantaged certain groups and disadvantaged others.

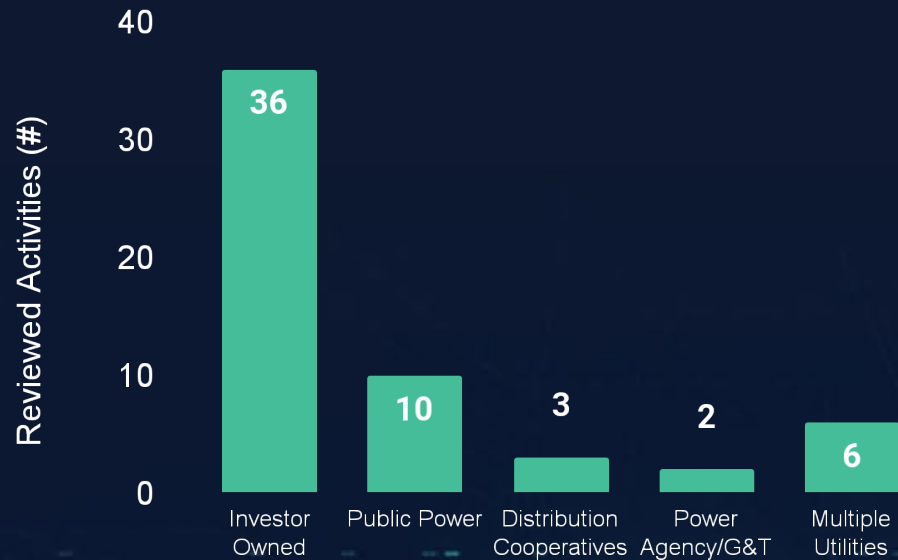


Community engagement: [The Spectrum of Engagement to Ownership](#), by Facilitating Power
Energy Equity: [Energy Equity Project Report](#) and [ACEEE Leading with Equity Initiative](#)

Research Summary

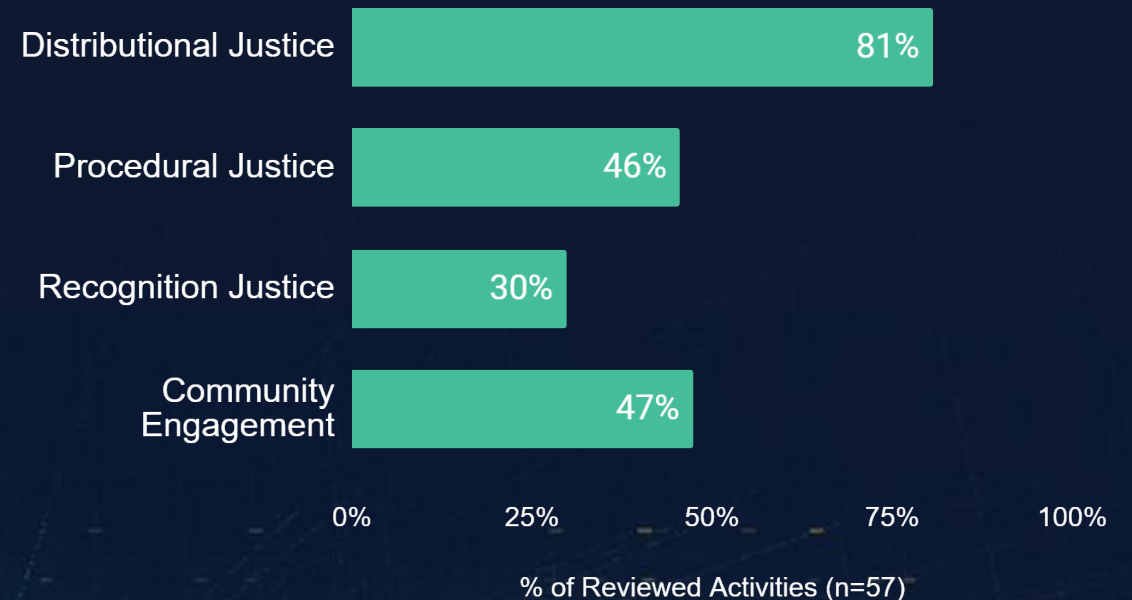
Overview of Reviewed Utility Activities

Examples from all types of utilities, in all regions of the U.S.



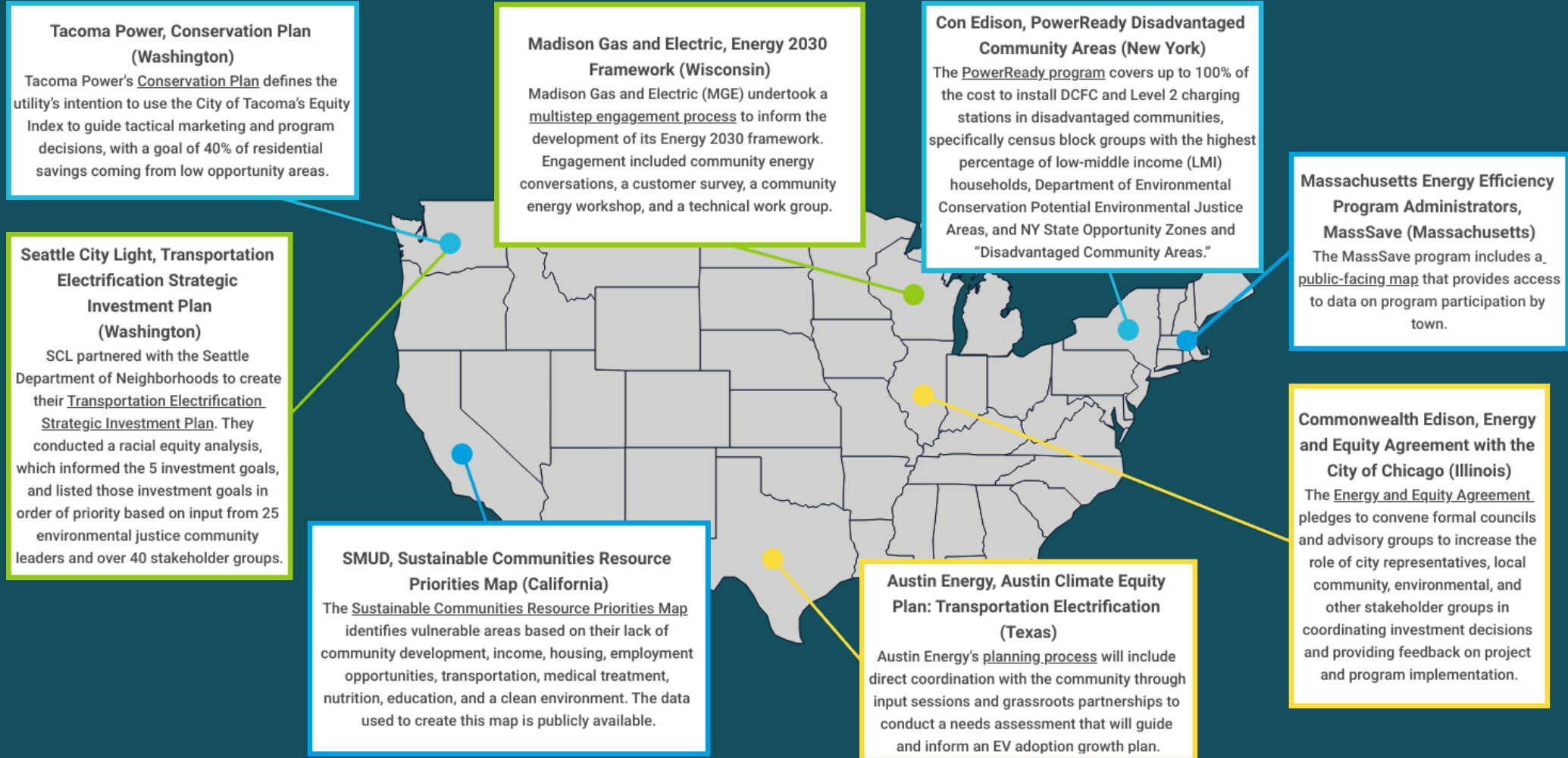
The included utilities serve regions in the U.S. north (24%), east (26%), south (20%), central (8%) and west (22%).

Most of the reviewed activities focus on distributional justice, based on file review



Case Studies

Representative Utility Examples



Legend

Recognition Justice

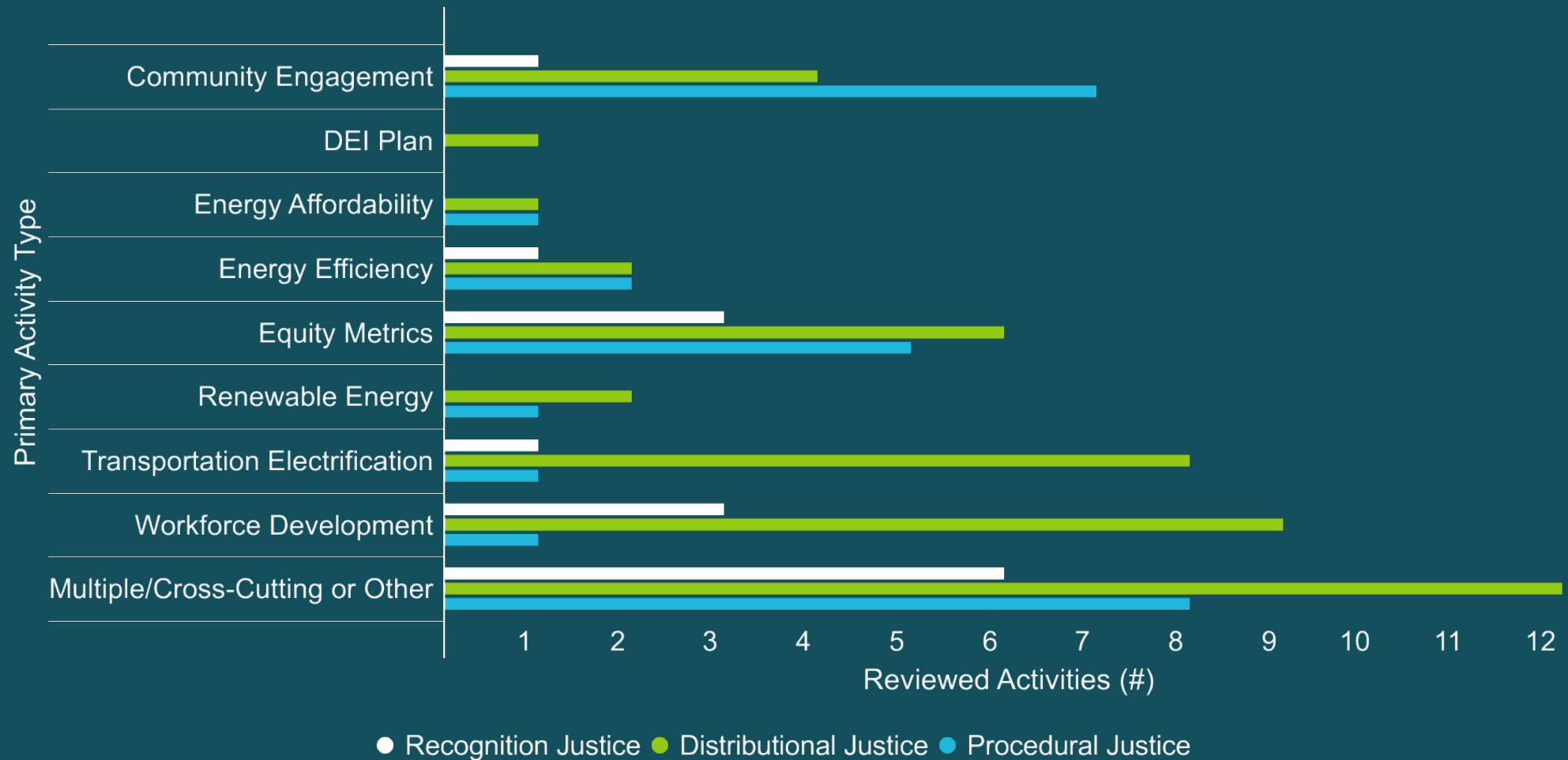
Distributional Justice

Procedural Justice

Community Engagement

Research Summary

Reviewed Utility Activity Types



Case Studies

Representative Utility Examples

Puget Sound Energy, 2021 Clean Energy Implementation Plan (Washington)

The Clean Energy Implementation Plan describes how Puget Sound Energy will implement the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) for 2022–2025. The Plan is a result of stakeholder input and feedback and ultimately seeks to create an affordable net-zero energy system that their customers help shape.

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Equity Metrics Data Initiative (California)

LADWP created the Equity Metrics Data Initiative (EMDI) to quantify and report the ability of their programs, services, and resources to reach all geographic areas and demographic groups in their service territory. The metrics are categorized into four categories: water and power infrastructure investment, customer incentive programs/services, procurement, and employment.

Ameren, Charge Ahead (Missouri)

The Charge Ahead program seeks to remove barriers to EV charging by incentivizing the installation of DCFC and L2 stations for public, MUD, and workplace applications. The \$4 million program reimburses up to 50% of installation costs for qualified customers, and 10% of the program's funds are reserved for underserved communities.

Commonwealth Edison Company, Diverse Energy Efficiency Service Provider (EESP) Incubator Program (Illinois)

The Diverse Energy Efficiency Service Provider (EESP) Incubator Program is a workforce development program that provides free education, training, mentorship, and networking opportunities to minority, women, and veteran contractors. Through the program, participants can earn certifications, develop business growth plans, and eventually complete ComEd EE projects.

National Grid, internal equity initiatives (Massachusetts)

National Grid's internal equity initiatives seek to review and incorporate equity practices into five pillars: customers, community, society, workforce, and supply chain. Through these initiatives, National Grid is ensuring equitable access to affordable and reliable energy, environmental benefits, economic development, workforce training, scholarships, and clean energy employment opportunities. Communities are encouraged to provide feedback, which National Grid uses to inform their programs and initiatives.

Tampa Electric Company, Drive Smart (Florida)

Tampa Electric's Drive Smart pilot program seeks to incentivize the installation of 200 Level 2 and 8 DCFC charging ports at workplaces, public/retail, multifamily, income qualifies, and government sites across their service territory. Charging station site hosts will be reimbursed up to \$5,000 for the cost to install, while income qualified and government sites will have 100% of their costs covered.

Duke Energy, The Duke Energy Foundation (North Carolina)

Through the Duke Energy Foundation, Duke Energy provides funding for workforce development and education at community colleges, historically Black colleges and universities, and nonprofits across the state. In total, \$615,000 have been awarded to job seekers and students, particularly those interested in the energy sector.

Legend

Workforce Development

Transportation Electrification

Equity Metrics

Acknowledgement

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