# Voices of Experience Addressing Equity

A U.S. Department of Energy Initiative

Inventory of Utility Community Engagement and Energy Equity Efforts

May 2023









### **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 in 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.



### **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

#### Tacoma Power, Conservation Plan (Washington)

Tacoma Power's <u>Conservation Plan</u> defines the utility's intention to use the City of Tacoma's Equity Index to guide tactical marketing and program decisions, with a goal of 40% of residential savings coming from low opportunity areas.

#### Seattle City Light, Transportation Electrification Strategic Investment Plan (Washington)

SCL partnered with the Seattle
Department of Neighborhoods to create
their <u>Transportation Electrification</u>
<u>Strategic Investment Plan</u>. They
conducted a racial equity analysis,
which informed the 5 investment goals,
and listed those investment goals in
order of priority based on input from 25
environmental justice community
leaders and over 40 stakeholder groups.

#### Madison Gas and Electric, Energy 2030 Framework (Wisconsin)

Madison Gas and Electric (MGE) undertook a multistep engagement process to inform the development of its Energy 2030 framework. Engagement included community energy

conversations, a customer survey, a community energy workshop, and a technical work group.

#### Con Edison, PowerReady Disadvantaged Community Areas (New York)

The PowerReady program covers up to 100% of the cost to install DCFC and Level 2 charging stations in disadvantaged communities, specifically census block groups with the highest percentage of low-middle income (LMI) households, Department of Environmental Conservation Potential Environmental Justice Areas, and NY State Opportunity Zones and "Disadvantaged Community Areas."

#### Massachusetts Energy Efficiency Program Administrators, MassSave (Massachusetts)

The MassSave program includes a public-facing map that provides access to data on program participation by town.

#### Commonwealth Edison, Energy and Equity Agreement with the City of Chicago (Illinois)

The Energy and Equity Agreement pledges to convene formal councils and advisory groups to increase the role of city representatives, local community, environmental, and other stakeholder groups in coordinating investment decisions and providing feedback on project and program implementation.

#### SMUD, Sustainable Communities Resource Priorities Map (California)

The <u>Sustainable Communities Resource Priorities Map</u>
identifies vulnerable areas based on their lack of
community development, income, housing, employment
opportunities, transportation, medical treatment,
nutrition, education, and a clean environment. The data
used to create this map is publicly available.

Austin Energy, Austin Climate Equity
Plan: Transportation Electrification
(Texas)

Austin Energy's <u>planning process</u> will include direct coordination with the community through input sessions and grassroots partnerships to conduct a needs assessment that will guide and inform an EV adoption growth plan.

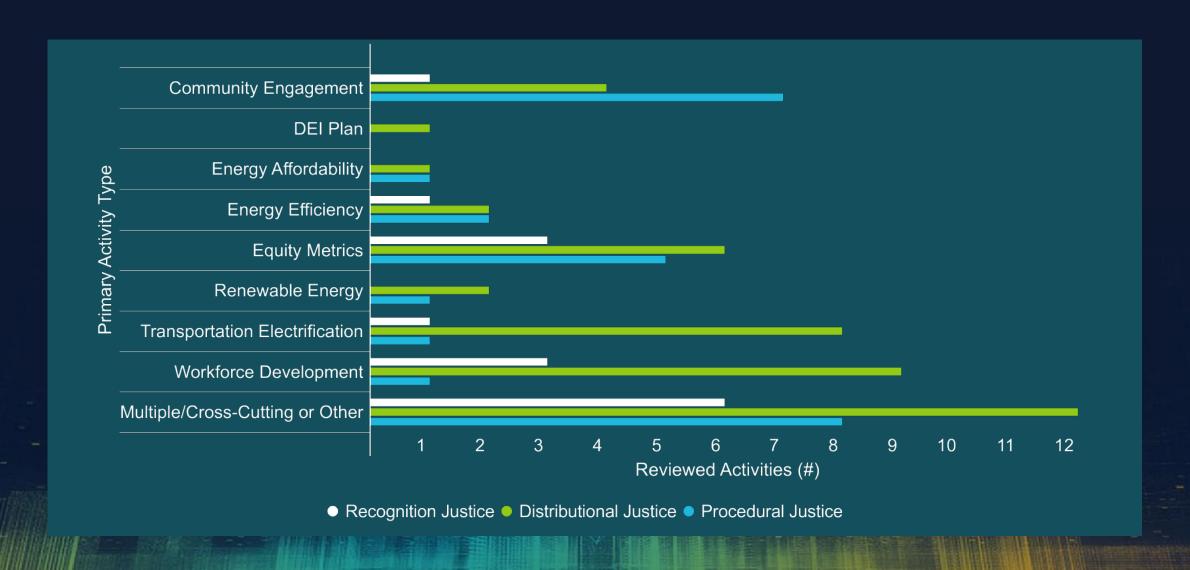
egend Recognition Justice

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.

#### Ameren, Charge Ahead (Missouri)

The <u>Charge Ahead</u> 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 <u>Diverse Energy Efficiency Service Provider</u>
(EESP) Incubator <u>Program</u> 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.

#### 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.

### Tampa Electric Company, Drive Smart (Florida)

Tampa Electric's <u>Drive Smart pilot program</u> 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 <u>Duke Energy Foundation</u>,
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.

gend Workforce Development

Transportation Electrification

**Equity Metrics** 

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