

Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination

Engagement Plan

June 2022



This plan has been prepared for the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) by SSG. SSG has a contract with the Commission to conduct the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.

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Background

The intent of this Engagement Plan is to outline the purpose, desired outcomes, approach, and roles and responsibilities of the engagement portion of the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.

Engagement Narrative

In 2021, the Washington Legislature directed the Utilities and Transportation Commission to “examine feasible and practical pathways for investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities to contribute their share to greenhouse gas emissions reductions as described in RCW 70A.45.020 [of Washington state law], and the impacts of energy decarbonization on residential and commercial customers and the electrical and natural gas utilities that serve them.”¹ RCW 70A.45.020 mandates that anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases in Washington state be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020, to 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, to 70 percent of 1990 levels by 2040, and by 95 percent of 1990 levels by 2050.

The engagement goal for the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination is to involve all interested and affected parties (aka collaborators²) to assist in the development of relevant pathways related to the decarbonization of the energy utility sector for the legislature to consider. This work will include:

- Identifying greenhouse gas reduction pathways for investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities; as well as
- Understanding the impacts of energy decarbonization on residential and commercial customers and the electrical and natural gas utilities that serve them.

The legislature will use this information to inform discussions on decarbonization targets and policies for investor-owned natural gas utilities.

¹ Senate Bill 5092 Section 143.4.

² Note: engagement practitioners are moving away from the use of the term “stakeholder” and toward using the following terms: interested and affected parties or impacted parties to denote members of the public. Both terms are used throughout this document.

Who are we trying to reach and who can participate?

Any interested person or group is welcome to participate in the engagement process. To develop a well-rounded approach to public engagement for this project, SSG conducted pre-engagement³ interviews with a diverse range of members of the public to help us understand who needs to be involved in providing feedback. These interviews helped identify baseline knowledge about the project among interested and affected parties, preferences for engagement, relevant groups that might otherwise be missed, and other potential issues and opportunities for the engagement process.

The goal of pre-engagement was to connect with key collaborators, thought leaders, and community influencers from a variety of groups to hear from diverse perspectives. As a result, the following groups of participants (also see Table 1, later in this document) for the engagement process were identified in pre-engagement:

- Utility sector, including natural gas utilities, electric utilities, and related industry groups and associations;
- Government/public organizations;
- Businesses and economic organizations;
- Construction and real estate sector;
- Transportation sector;
- Civil society organizations, including environmental groups, equity-seeking groups, community groups, and groups concerned with energy poverty;⁴ and
- Other interested parties.

³ Pre-engagement, the practice of speaking to a representative group of stakeholders to ask them how to best engage, is a best practice in engagement planning and design. It is embedded in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) planning protocol, which is recognized as the global standard for public engagement.

⁴ Energy poverty describes a circumstance in which an individual, household, or community cannot access or afford energy. In Washington, energy poverty is measured through data on energy burdens and income. A household is considered to be facing a high energy burden when it spends more than 6% of its income on energy (to fuel cars and power and heat homes) and a severe energy burden when it spends more than 10% of its income on energy. In 2018, 11% of Washington households faced a high or severe energy burden, according to the Washington State Department of Commerce. (See: *Washington State Department of Commerce. Revised: Statewide energy burden data [RCW 19.405.120(3)]. (April 29, 2021), <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/czuj8tqaj9i5i7c8gyhld8htscbn9xsk>.)* These statements are based on nationally accepted definitions of high and severe energy burden. (See *American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, "National and Regional Energy Burdens", 2020*, American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, "National and Regional Energy Burdens," 2020, <https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/ACEEE-01%20Energy%20Burden%20-%20National.pdf>.)

How can interested parties participate in the engagement process?

A description of engagement methods is outlined in this plan, and can be found in the Phase 2: Active Engagement Period section, further into this document.

Interested parties have a variety of options and choices in how to participate, depending on level of interest and time availability. These include:

- Participating in the Introductory Open Meeting/Educational Webinar.
- Joining the Decarbonization Action Group (Please note that members of this group are expected to attend all workshops as the feedback required builds on each workshop; see Phase 2: Active Engagement Period section for time commitments).
- Participating in the open Technical Meetings workshops (attendance at all meetings is recommended but not required).
- Taking and sharing the Public Online Survey 1 - Decarbonization Opportunities and Challenges (see Phase 2: Active Engagement Period section for the expected timeframe for launch).
- Taking and sharing the Public Online Survey 2 - Decarbonization Actions (see Phase 2: Active Engagement Period section for the expected timeframe for launch).
- Keeping up to date with project updates on the website (<https://www.utc.wa.gov/regulated-industries/utilities/energy/natural-gas-decarbonization>) and submitting feedback.

Interested and affected members of the public are encouraged to participate in a way that works best for them.

Engagement Context

SSG is assisting the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) to develop and examine pathways for decarbonizing energy utilities. These pathways will consider emerging technological, economic, and policy trends related to the energy system and renewable energy. This project will provide the Commission with various possible strategies and actions for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and shifting to renewable energy. For each pathway examined, the analysis will evaluate the

environmental, health, and economic costs and benefits to customers, equity considerations for low-income customers and highly impacted communities, and regulatory changes to facilitate the decarbonization of the services that gas utilities provide.

Supporting Strategic Documentation

SSG conducted situational research to inform the engagement strategy and Decarbonization Pathways Engagement Plan. SSG reviewed existing strategic documents, planning initiatives, and climate modeling related to this project to develop a plan and modeling method for the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination. Drawing on examples, principles, and approaches from these documents will increase the examination's alignment with the State's climate action goals and ensure modeling is grounded in the local context.

What is being decided and who decides?

By June 1, 2023, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission will use the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination to report to the legislature on “feasible and practical pathways for investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities to contribute their share to greenhouse gas emissions reductions as described in [RCW 70A.45.020](#), and the impacts of energy decarbonization on residential and commercial customers and the electrical and natural gas utilities that serve them.”⁵ The legislature will use this information to inform discussions on decarbonization targets and policies for investor-owned natural gas utilities.

⁵ Senate Bill 5092 Section 143.4.

Engagement Approach

The Engagement Approach is the framework that will ensure all interested and affected communities are given opportunities to inform the process and provide feedback to create the best Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination possible.

What's Out of Scope?

Facts are not up for debate and thus are outside the scope of engagement. The facts for this engagement include the following:

- Climate change is real and primarily driven by human activity.
- By January 2023, SSG will submit the Energy Decarbonization Pathways examination to the UTC.
- The UTC will use the examination to present a report to the Washington State legislature on the energy decarbonization pathways that were examined and associated considerations.
- The Engagement Plan will be designed to allow all interested and impacted communities to inform and provide feedback to create the best Energy Pathways Examination recommendations possible.
- Equity will be at the heart of the engagement process and the development of decarbonization pathways.

Guiding Engagement Principles

The guiding principles are designed to ensure that engagement activities help inform the decarbonization pathways by identifying and considering utility impacts; the environmental, health, and economic costs and benefits of decarbonization for impacted communities; and equity considerations for low-income customers and highly impacted communities. The following principles will guide the design and execution of all engagement techniques:

- Engagement conversations will be based on values.
- The Project Team will identify and work to remove barriers to engagement for vulnerable and historically underrepresented community members.

- Engagement meeting formats will be guided by interested or affected parties' preferences.
- Online engagement opportunities will be as interactive as possible. If in-person engagement is preferred, opportunities will be planned with consideration for social distancing, masks, and other COVID-19 safety protocols.
- To raise the community's understanding of climate planning, the Project Team will increase awareness about decarbonization during the active engagement period.
- The Project Team will involve key interested or affected parties in information collection to demonstrate process integrity and build credibility for recommendations.
- Communication of background information and engagement opportunities (times, dates, online venues) will happen in a reasonable time before the engagement.
- Interested or affected parties will have opportunities to provide input and will be informed on how their feedback shapes the final report.
- Concerns and aspirations will be discussed to formulate options for consideration.
- Evaluations of each session will be conducted to allow for adaptive management of the engagement process.

Engagement Objectives

The following are the main objectives of this Engagement Plan described according to the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement: inform, consult, involve, or collaborate (see Appendix A).

How to read this section of the plan: Objectives + Techniques

Engagement objectives are strategic and explain the 'Why' of engagement. They outline the purpose (not the technique) of the plan, defining what is successful and meaningful, while being clear about the level of influence participants have. The engagement objectives have been designed based on information available in the project proposal, the pre-engagement summary (see Appendix C), as well as the feedback provided by Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) staff to date.

Engagement techniques (such as workshops, committees, surveys) **are tactical and explain the 'How' of engagement.** They appear in the Engagement Phases and Techniques section and are linked with these objectives to show how the techniques achieve the objectives. A glossary of engagement techniques that will be deployed in this project is available in Appendix B.

The outputs and outcomes drive the techniques selected to achieve these objectives. **Outcomes** are changes in state (e.g., the development of a relationship), and **outputs** are tangible (e.g., a list or a request). The combination of these with the engagement techniques ensure achievement of the objectives.

Engagement objectives are listed first, then outputs and outcomes, followed by the techniques associated with the objective. Further detail on the engagement techniques are provided further on in this document.

Objective 1: *To inform impacted communities and parties about the creation of the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination project, how they can participate in the process, and updated progress on the project.*

- **Outcome:** Champions of the project are actively recruited to participate in the process.
- **Outcome:** A broad range of impacted communities (e.g., businesses, equity-seeking groups, environmental groups, energy industry, and construction industries) know how to provide their input, are familiar with the project and enthusiastic about their involvement.
- **Outcome:** Existing community organizations provide regular project updates to their constituents.
- **Output:** Identify a list of champions and community members interested in regular communications and engagement.
- **Output:** Identify a list of existing community organization newsletters, social media channels, and other communication channels to provide regular updates.

Communications Techniques to achieve Objective 1:

- Work with UTC's existing community outreach and communications experts to provide regular project updates via multiple communications platforms.

- Provide regular project updates for UTC/project webpage to encourage engagement, including notification of opportunities for continued participation.
- Provide information updates to community organizations to inform their networks about engagement opportunities.

Objective 2: *To involve impacted communities in deciding about their preferred ways to be engaged for the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.*

- **Outcome:** Identify an efficient, effective, and replicable outreach method encouraging meaningful engagement.
- **Output:** A series of pre-engagement interviews with representatives of the different community sectors of Washington.
- **Output:** A pre-engagement summary report with recommendations for the engagement plan.

Engagement Techniques to achieve Objective 2:

- The pre-engagement interview process.

Objective 3: *To inform impacted communities outside of the utility sector about the energy sector; decarbonization and its potential impacts on the energy system, economy, and society; and the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.*

- **Outcome:** Impacted communities unfamiliar with the energy sector have a baseline level of knowledge to provide input.
- **Output:** Meaningful and relevant input from impacted communities.

Communication techniques to achieve Objective 3:

- Public education session (e.g., webinar).
- Post educational materials on the UTC website and share with relevant groups.

Objective 4: *To involve impacted communities and parties, to document their suggested approaches to and concerns about decarbonization; and to identify*

specifically what should be examined when selecting options for decarbonization pathways.

- **Outcome:** Impacted communities share their concerns about the energy sector and access to energy, including climate change and its impacts on energy.
- **Output:** A list of energy and climate concerns from impacted communities and parties, that can be used to inform the modeling process, development of decarbonization actions, and equity considerations.
- **Outcome:** Impacted communities share their suggested approaches to inform the options for decarbonization pathways.
- **Output:** Input for criteria for prioritizing and selecting decarbonization actions.

Engagement techniques to achieve Objective 4:

- Workshops with Decarbonization Advisory Group (described later in this plan).
- Technical meetings (open to all).
- Two public surveys to gather input from the general public/impacted communities across the state.
- Equity-focused group to refine equity considerations for decarbonization pathways.

Objective 5: *To involve impacted communities in gathering their input on approaches and assumptions for decarbonization pathway modeling to inform the modeling approach for the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.*

- **Outcome:** Decarbonization Advisory Group members are supportive of the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination and encourage members of their network and/or team to participate in the engagement process.
- **Outcome:** Impacted communities have an opportunity to provide feedback that informs the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.
- **Outcome:** The public provides their input, are familiar with the Decarbonization Pathways, and are enthusiastic about their involvement.
- **Output:** Identify a list of representatives of key impacted communities for the Decarbonization Advisory Group.
- **Output:** Community survey is sent to the identified list of interested and affected parties and posted on the UTC/project webpage to reach community members.
- **Output:** Identify participants to invite to participate in engagement activities.

- **Output:** Document advice and suggested criteria for the development of decarbonization pathways.

Engagement Techniques to achieve Objective 5:

- Create a Decarbonization Advisory Group and hold four workshops with this group.
- Hold four technical meetings, open to the public, to gather input on scenario modeling, decarbonization actions, and decarbonization pathways.
- Regular project communication with the Decarbonization Advisory Group members and other members of impacted communities.

Objective 6: *To inform impacted communities about how their feedback and participation shaped the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.*

- **Outcome:** Impacted communities understand how their feedback shaped the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination and find the process acceptable.
- **Output:** An engagement strategy highlighting the engagement objectives and techniques is used throughout the project.
- **Output:** Post-engagement event participant evaluations.
- **Output:** Engagement “What We Heard” updates provided at key points of the project.
- **Output:** Final engagement summary.

Engagement Techniques to achieve Objective 6:

- Regular communication and project updates.
- What We Heard Summary Report on how feedback from the Decarbonization Advisory Group, technical meetings, surveys, and equity focus group informed the creation of the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.

Interested and Affected Parties Map

For this plan, interested and affected (impacted) parties can be grouped into the following categories:

- The utility sector, including natural gas utilities, electric utilities, and related industry groups and associations;
- Government/public organizations;
- Businesses and economic organizations;
- Construction and real estate sector;
- Transportation sector;
- Civil society organizations, including environmental groups, equity-seeking groups, community groups, and groups concerned with energy poverty; State Tribes; and
- Others.

The project team conducted a pre-engagement process involving interviews with key stakeholders, thought leaders, and community influencers from several groups to hear about how they would like to be engaged and who should be engaged. These interviews helped us identify baseline knowledge about the project among stakeholders, preferences for engagement, stakeholder groups that might otherwise be missed, and other potential issues and opportunities for the engagement process. The full pre-engagement report is found in Appendix C of this document.

In addition to providing feedback opportunities to impacted communities at large during key phases of the planning process, the project team will engage impacted communities through a Decarbonization Advisory Group composed of representatives of impacted communities.

Table 1. List of groups, organizations, and individuals that may be engaged. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and SSG intends to engage with any group, organization, or individual who expresses interest in the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination.

Affiliation	Group, Organizations, and/or Individuals
Government	
Local, regional, and federal government	Bonneville Power Administration Local governments Local and regional government committees Northwest Power and Conservation Council Regional/local planning authorities
State-level government	Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission Washington State Department of Commerce Energy Office Government Agencies working on Building Codes

Affiliation	Group, Organizations, and/or Individuals
	Office of Public Counsel Regulatory agencies Washington State Department of Ecology Washington State Department of Transportation Washington State Transportation Commission Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) Washington State Transportation Improvement Board Washington State University – Energy Program
Utilities and technical experts	
Transportation sector	Alliance for Transportation Electrification Amtrak and other rail organizations Association of Washington Cities Fuelers Joint Transportation Committee - Washington Legislature Ports and Maritime Groups Northwest Seaport Alliance Regional transportation planning organizations (RTPO) Transit authorities, including King County Metro and Sound Transit Transportation Choice Coalition Washington Highway Users Federation Washington Trucking Association
Utility Sectors	Investor-owned utilities, both gas and electric Municipal utilities Public utility districts Rural electric cooperatives Tribal utilities Other consumer owned utilities WRECA: Washington Rural Electric Cooperative Association
Technical Experts	Building experts, including the Rocky Mountain Institute Low Carbon Resources Initiative (Gas Technology Institute and Electric Power Research Institute) Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance Technology experts and consultants within the decarbonization sector Local universities Regulatory Assistance Project
Business Associations and Businesses	

Affiliation	Group, Organizations, and/or Individuals
Business sectors	Appliance dealers Energy-intensive industries and companies, including Kaiser Aluminum Financial institutions Hospitality industry Manufacturers Small businesses Organic waste industry, including Washington Refuse and Recycling Association
Agriculture and Food Industry	Agricultural manufacturing facilities Food Northwest Washington Farm Bureau Washington Fruit Tree Association Washington Food Industry Association Washington Potato and Onion Association Washington Wheat Growers Association
Associations	Association of Washington Business National Consumer Law Center Northwest Pulp & Paper Association NFIB and other small businesses associations Northwest Gas Association The Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas
Building and Construction Industry	
Construction Industry	Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Washington Building Industry Association of Washington Home builders and home builder associations HVAC dealers Mechanical Contractors Association of Western Washington Northwest Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association Sheet metal contractors Washington Air Condition Contractors Association
Real estate	Building owners Realtors, including Washington Realtors NAIOP Washington State
Civil Society and Equity Seeking Groups	
Groups focused on climate justice, environmental	Climate Solutions Front and Centered

Affiliation	Group, Organizations, and/or Individuals
issues, low-income and affordability advocacy, and equity issues	Northwest Energy Coalition Puget Sound Sage Washington Environmental Council Community organizations from across the state Climate justice groups Energy Equity Project Initiative for Energy Justice Vulnerable communities Highly impacted communities ⁶ Washington State Community Action Partnership Initiative for Energy Justice Energy Equity Project Zero Waste Washington
Unions	Laborers including plumbers, pipe-fitters, electricians, and operating engineers Labor groups and unions, including IBEW 77 and Washington & Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers
Utility customers	Alliance of Western Energy Consumers Commercial utility customers, including small-business owners and energy intensive industries Residential utility customers, including low-income customers

Tribal Communities

Engagement approaches with Washington tribes and other Indigenous communities will be discussed between UTC staff and SSG. The team will follow state guidelines for consultation with Indigenous communities.

For this plan, we must:

1. Ensure that the UTC team and SSG consultants are familiar with the individual policies/processes of each Indigenous group.
2. Collaborate with other UTC project teams in tribal consultations.
3. Follow the individual guidelines for consultation (where they exist) with each Tribe or group to set up a discussion with the appropriate participants.

⁶ As defined in RCW 19.405.020: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=19.405.020>

4. Reach out to Tribes or groups that don't have consultation policies or guidelines to find out who best to invite to a discussion with the UTC.
5. Have meetings to answer the following question: "How would the Tribe like to be engaged in the creation of the Energy Decarbonization Pathways Examination?"
 - A variety of engagement options can be offered and discussed.
6. Based on the response, plan engagement accordingly.
7. SSG can be present, if appropriate, or provide information packages for these meetings to present up-to-date information on the status of the project and the results of engagement efforts to date.

Engagement Phases and Techniques

The engagement timeline will be integrated with the project's modeling activities. Engagement input will inform modeling assumptions and methods and be used to refine the decarbonization pathways.

In addition, the engagement techniques have been designed to provide a transparent engagement process, as identified during the pre-engagement interviews. (The pre-engagement report is available in Appendix C.)

Definitions

Decarbonization Advisory Group

The Decarbonization Advisory Group will be composed of representatives of impacted communities. Participation will be capped at one representative per stakeholder organization (for example, one member from each utility, environmental organization, equity-seeking organization, clean energy organization) and include up to two members of the public.

Participants should commit to attending all four Decarbonization Advisory Group Meetings and have an interest in participating in a detailed analysis of decarbonization modeling, actions, and pathways.

Individuals/organizations can express their interest by contacting policy staff at the Commission (policy@utc.wa.gov).

Technical Meetings

The Technical Meetings will consist of workshops that offer impacted parties an opportunity to learn about and provide feedback on detailed aspects of modeling, as well as other technical and procedural considerations. Technical Meetings are open to all. Participants are encouraged to attend all meetings, but that is not a requirement for participation.

Business As Usual (BAU): refers to a projected scenario where the entity does not take any additional carbon emissions mitigation/decarbonization actions moving forward beyond what is already occurring.

Business As Planned (BAP): refers to a projected scenario where the entity takes some carbon emissions mitigation actions that are currently planned but not enough to achieve a net-zero or low-carbon target in the future.

Phase 1: Pre-engagement Interviews + Engagement Design

Project initiation: March 2022 - May 2022

Activity	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Pre-Engagement Interviews and Summary Report</p> <p>Role in the project: Identify appropriate engagement and communications techniques to involve diverse stakeholders in the process.</p>	<p>1) Conduct interviews of individuals identified in coordination with UTC (30-minute to 1-hour phone or video call).</p> <p>2) Analyze interviews and present anonymized findings in a pre-engagement report.</p>	<p>1) Identify participants and invite them.</p> <p>2) Review and approve the pre-engagement report.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Pre-engagement report published on UTC/project website as an appendix to the Engagement Plan.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>

Activity	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Engagement Plan Design</p> <p>Role in the project: Guide engagement approach for project.</p>	Draft Engagement Plan.	Refine and approve	All	Published on UTC/project website.	June 2022
<p>Develop project engagement materials (including promotional materials that can be shared online via. Social media, website, etc.).</p>	Prepare communications materials for the project.	1) Post communications materials on relevant channels. 2) Provide support and guidance.	All	Transparency determined by relevant engagement activity.	Ongoing, throughout project

Phase 2: Active Engagement Period

May - November 2022

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Introductory Open Meeting/Educational Webinar: These meetings will inform participants about the project, the current status of utility emissions, and how they can get engaged.</p> <p>Role in the project: Inform diverse impacted communities about the process and how they can get involved.</p>	<p>Inform. Promise to the public: we will keep you informed on the plan’s progress and opportunities for you to become involved.</p>	<p>Prepare the presentation.</p>	<p>Identify and invite participants.</p>	<p>1, 3</p>	<p>1) Open to everyone. 2) Recorded and published on UTC/project website. Recording will be available for groups who are unable to attend during business hours.</p>	<p>May 27, 2022, 2 hour session.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Educational Content For UTC/Project Website: Accessible information on the utility sector, decarbonization, how it happens and why we need it, regulation, and this project.</p> <p>Role in the project: Participants less familiar with the utility sector feel prepared to engage.</p>	<p>Inform.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will keep you informed on the plan's progress and opportunities for you to become involved.</p>	<p>Prepare materials.</p>	<p>1) Refine and approve the materials. 2) Post on the website.</p>	<p>1, 3</p>	<p>Published on UTC/project website.</p>	<p>June 2022 publication. Available throughout the project engagement period.</p>
<p>Updates on project progress: Updates on engagement activities and progress are posted regularly on UTC/project website.</p> <p>Role in the project: Impacted communities are aware of project progress and opportunities to provide input.</p>	<p>Inform.</p> <p>Promise to the public: we will keep you informed on the plan's progress and opportunities for you to become involved.</p>	<p>Prepare materials.</p>	<p>1) Refine and approve the materials. 2) Post on the website.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Published on UTC/project website.</p>	<p>Publish between June and November 2022. Available throughout the engagement period.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Decarbonization Advisory Group Workshop 1 - Introduction, BAU, and BAP assumptions: The DAG is composed of members representing key impacted communities. The first DAG workshop will provide DAG members with a chance to meet one another and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Learn about the project and their role, 2) Learn about the current state of emissions and projected emissions under a business-as-usual (BAU) scenario, and 3) Review and provide feedback on the business-as-planned (BAP) assumptions. <p>Role in the project: DAG becomes familiar with the project and provides input to help the SSG team finalize the BAP assumptions and scenario.</p>	<p>Involve.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Design an annotated agenda. 2) Facilitate the workshop and document input. 3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team. 4) Create a digital workbook and framework for soliciting input (e.g., online whiteboard, workbook, etc.). 5) Design and implement a post-meeting survey (to 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop DAG Terms of Reference with support from SSG. 2) Identify and invite DAG members with support from SSG. 3) Review the annotated agenda and provide feedback. 4) Attend the meeting. 	<p>4, 5</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A summary report will be posted online within 2 weeks of workshop. 2) DAG meeting results will be captured and reported in the 'What We Heard' summary at the end of the project. 3) DAG Workshops can be recorded if desired. 4) Members evaluations will be given a survey at the end of each meeting. 	<p>Late June 2022. 2-hour meeting.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
		gather feedback to improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).				
<p>Public Online Survey 1 - Decarbonization Opportunities and Challenges: The public survey will share information about the project and the current state of emissions and gather input on concerns about decarbonization, as well as opportunities and challenges for reducing emissions. The survey will also solicit ideas from the public on solutions for a decarbonized future, while being presented with different options for consideration.</p>	<p>Consult. Promise to the public: We will seek your comments on the variety of options presented.</p>	<p>1) Draft and finalize a survey. 2) Analyze survey results and prepare summary.</p>	<p>1) Review and approve the survey. 2) Post on the UTC/project website. 3) Share with networks and on social media.</p>	<p>1, 3, 4</p>	<p>1) Open to everyone. 2) Survey results will be analyzed and summarized in a blog or one-pager for the UTC/project website as well as included in the “What We Heard” report.</p>	<p>June 2022. Survey available online via Typeform.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Role in the project: The input will be considered during the design of decarbonization actions and pathways. The survey will also identify challenges that could hamper potential decarbonization actions, as well as concerns about climate action that may need to be addressed.</p>						
<p>Technical Meeting 1 - Introduction, BAU, and BAP assumptions: The first technical meeting will share information about the project and role of the technical meetings. The current state of emissions, BAU scenario, and BAP assumptions will be shared with attendees. Feedback will be gathered on BAP assumptions and how they might be improved.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will be used to finalize the BAP scenario.</p>	<p>Involve.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Design an annotated agenda. 2) Facilitate the meeting and document input. 3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team. 4) Design and implement a post-meeting survey (to gather 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review the annotated agendas and other materials and provide feedback. 2) Attend the meetings. 3) Invite people to participate. 	<p>4, 5</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Open to everyone. 2) Recorded and published on UTC/project website. 3) Meeting results will be captured and reported in the 'What We Heard' summary at the end of the project. 	<p>Late June 2022. 2-hour meeting.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
		feedback to improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).				
<p>Decarbonization Advisory Group Workshop 2 - BAP and Decarbonization Opportunities and Barriers: The second DAG workshop will focus on the BAP results and potential decarbonization actions for the pathways. DAG members will have a chance to review the BAP results and identify opportunities for and barriers to reducing emissions. They will suggest and review potential decarbonization actions, and identify equity considerations.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will</p>	<p>Involve. Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible, and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<p>1) Design an annotated agenda. 2) Facilitate the meeting and document input. 3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team. 4) Design and implement a meeting evaluation</p>	<p>1) Review the annotated agendas, other materials, and provide feedback. 2) Attend the meetings.</p>	<p>4, 5</p>	<p>1) Summary report posted online within 2 weeks of workshop 2) Meeting results will be captured and reported on in the 'What We Heard' summary at the end of the project. 3) DAG</p>	<p>July 2022. 2-hour meeting.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
inform the identification of decarbonization actions.		survey (to improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).			Workshops can be recorded if desired.	
<p>Open Technical Meeting 2 - BAP and Decarbonization Opportunities and Barriers: The second technical meeting will focus on BAP results and potential decarbonization actions. Participants will have a chance to review the BAP results and identify opportunities for and barriers to reducing emissions. They will suggest and review potential decarbonization actions, identify equity considerations, and provide input on modeling considerations.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will</p>	<p>Involve.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<p>1) Design an annotated agenda.</p> <p>2) Facilitate the meeting and document input.</p> <p>3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team.</p> <p>4) Design and implement a post-meeting survey (to</p>	<p>1) Review the annotated agendas and other materials, and provide feedback.</p> <p>2) Attend the meetings.</p> <p>3) Invite people to participate.</p>	4, 5	<p>1) Open to everyone.</p> <p>2) Recorded and published on UTC/project website.</p> <p>3) Meeting results will be captured and reported in the 'What We Heard' summary at the end of the project.</p>	July 2022. 2-hour meeting.

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
inform the identification of decarbonization actions.		gather feedback to improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).				
<p>Decarbonization Advisory Group Workshop 3 - Decarbonization</p> <p>Actions: In the third workshop, the DAG will learn about potential suites of decarbonization actions to model and provide input on modeling assumptions and considerations, potential co-benefits and risks, and potential equity impacts.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will inform the decarbonization pathways and related implementation considerations.</p>	<p>Involve.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<p>1) Design an annotated agenda.</p> <p>2) Facilitate the meeting and document input.</p> <p>3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team.</p> <p>4) Design and implement a meeting</p>	<p>1) Review the annotated agendas and other materials and provide feedback.</p> <p>2) Attend the meetings.</p>	4, 5	<p>1) Summary report posted online within 2 weeks of workshop.</p> <p>2) Meeting feedback will be captured in What We Heard summary at the end of the project.</p> <p>3) DAG Workshops can</p>	September 2022. 2-hour meeting.

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
		evaluation survey (to improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).			be recorded if desired.	
<p>Public Survey 2 - Decarbonization Actions: The second public survey will share information about the actions in the potential decarbonization pathways and gather input on their suitability for the local context, potential implementation challenges, and perceived economic and equity impacts.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will inform the decarbonization pathways.</p>	<p>Consult. Promise to the public: We will seek your comments on the variety of options presented.</p>	<p>1) Draft and finalize the survey. 2) Analyze the survey results and prepare summary.</p>	<p>1) Review and approve the survey. 2) Post on UTC/project website.</p>	4	<p>1) Open to everyone. 2) Survey results will be analyzed and summarized in a blog or one-pager for the UTC/project website.</p>	<p>September 2022. Survey available online via Typeform.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Equity Focus Group: The equity focus group will gather representatives of communities who are not heard from as often and who are affected by potential equity impacts of decarbonization and gather feedback to validate the approach for evaluating equity impacts.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will help identify equity considerations related to the decarbonization pathways.</p>	<p>Involve.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Design the session. 2) Prepare the presentation and focus group questions. 3) Facilitate session. 4) Take notes 5) Prepare an anonymized summary report of the input. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Curate the invite list for the session. 2) Provide feedback on the session presentation and questions. 	<p>4</p>	<p><i>Open to members of equity-seeking organizations/ representatives.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Summary report posted online within 2 weeks of workshop. 2) Highlights of focus groups will be captured in the What We Heard summary at the end of the project. 	<p>September 2022. 2-hour meeting.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Technical Meeting 3 - Decarbonization Actions: In the third technical meeting, participants will learn about potential suites of decarbonization actions to model and related assumptions. They will provide input on assumptions, other modeling considerations, potential equity impacts, potential co-benefits, and potential risks.</p> <p>Role in the project: The input will inform the decarbonization pathways and related implementation considerations.</p>	<p>Involve.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Design an annotated agenda. 2) Facilitate the meeting and document input. 3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team. 4) Design and implement a post-meeting survey (to gather feedback to improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review the annotated agendas and other materials and provide feedback. 2) Attend the meetings. 3) Invite people to participate. 	<p>4, 5</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Open to everyone. 2) Recorded and published on UTC/project website. 3) Meeting results will be captured and reported in the 'What We Heard' summary at the end of the project. 	<p>September 2022.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
		feedback).				
<p>Decarbonization Advisory Group Workshop 4 - Exploring Decarbonization Pathways: In the fourth workshop, the DAG will review the final decarbonization pathways and have an opportunity to provide input on how the pathways might affect health, economic, and equity issues. They will also share their recommendations on how decarbonization actions could be implemented in a way that reduces negative impacts.</p> <p>Role in the project: Input used to finalize analysis.</p>	<p>Involve. Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<p>1) Design an annotated agenda. 2) Facilitate the meeting and document input. 3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team. 4) Design and implement a meeting evaluation survey (to improve future</p>	<p>1) Review annotated agendas, and other materials and provide feedback. 2) Attend the meetings.</p>	<p>4, 5</p>	<p>1) Summary report posted online within 2 weeks of workshop 2) Meeting will be captured in the What We Heard summary at the end of the project. 3) DAG Workshops can be recorded if</p>	<p>October 2022. 2-hour meeting.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
		meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).			desired.	
<p>Technical Meeting 4 - Procedural considerations, health, and equity: In the fourth technical meeting, participants will review the final decarbonization pathways and provide input on constraints, impacts, and potential legislative considerations. They will also have an opportunity to provide input into how the pathways might affect health, economic, and equity issues.</p> <p>Role in the project: Input used to finalize analysis.</p>	<p>Involve. Promise to the public: We will incorporate your suggestions and feedback to the extent possible and seek advice in formulating alternatives.</p>	<p>1) Design an annotated agenda. 2) Facilitate the meeting and document input. 3) Provide subject matter experts from the SSG team. 4) Design and implement a post-meeting survey (to gather feedback to</p>	<p>1) Review annotated agendas and other materials and provide feedback. 2) Attend the meetings. 3) Invite people to participate.</p>	<p>4, 5</p>	<p>1) Open to everyone. 2) Recorded and published on UTC/project website. 3) Meeting results will be captured and reported in the 'What We Heard' summary at the end of the project.</p>	<p>October 2022. 2-hour meeting.</p>

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
		improve future meetings and give participants a chance to share any additional feedback).				

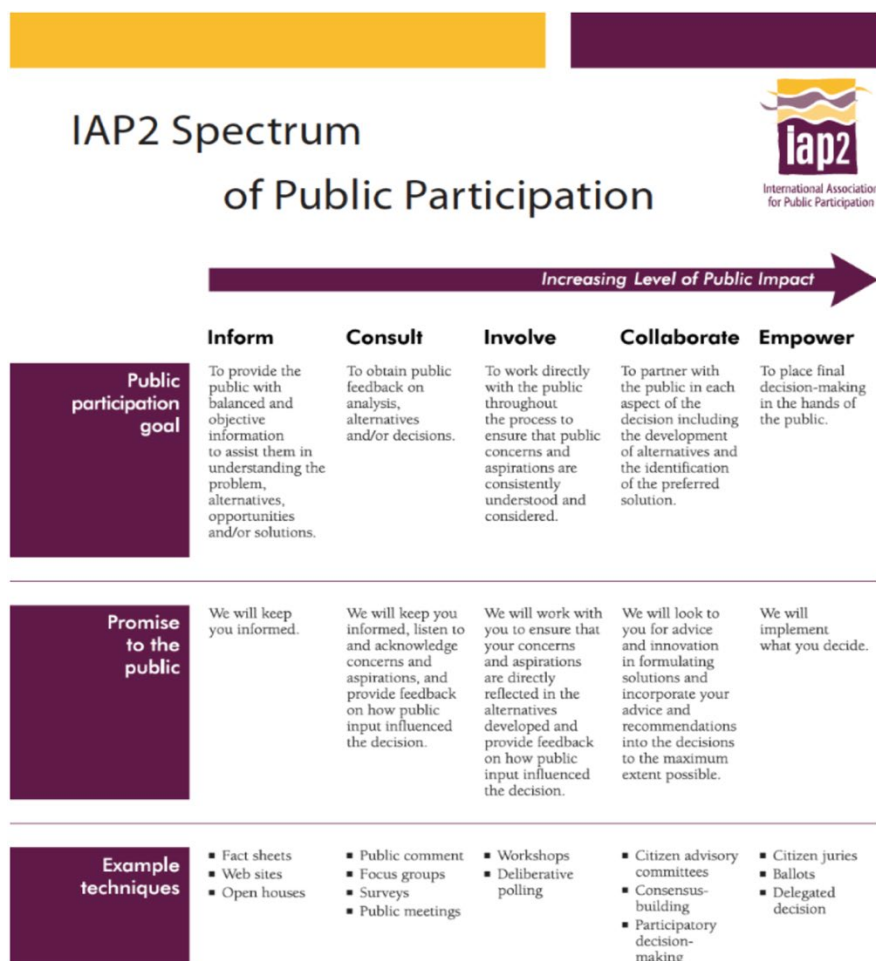
Phase 3: Final Report

December 2022

Activity	IAP2 Level	SSG	UTC	Objectives	Transparency	Timeframe
<p>Final “What We Heard” Engagement Summary Report: The report will summarize and analyze feedback from each of the engagement activities.</p>	<p>Inform.</p> <p>Promise to the public: We will keep you informed on the plan’s progress and opportunities for you to become involved.</p>	<p>Draft and finalize the report.</p>	<p>Provide feedback on the draft report.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Published on UTC/project website.</p>	<p>December 2022</p>

Appendix A: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation can be found on this page: <https://iap2usa.org/cvs> and by scrolling down to the “IAP2 Spectrum” button.



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Appendix B: Glossary of Engagement Techniques

An advisory group is made up of a group of experts and/or representatives of impacted communities formed to develop a specific project or policy recommendation. The IAP2 level of engagement is typically “Involve” or “Collaborate” (depending on the terms of reference for the advisory group).

Community surveys are used to collect quantitative and qualitative information from a diverse group of stakeholders. They are often designed to receive feedback on the opportunities, challenges, and supports needed to implement an action. The IAP2 level of engagement is generally “Consult” but can also be “Involve.”

Focus groups are used to derive sector-specific feedback, as well as to provide a comfortable space to engage with vulnerable or equity-denied groups. A focus group is typically composed of five to eight participants representing a sector/issue, such as equity, policy, transportation, or buildings. Participants partake in a facilitated discussion to provide feedback on the impacts of decarbonization actions within their sector/issue area. The IAP2 level of engagement is “Involve.”

Public meetings are open to the public at large and usually include a presentation, as well as an opportunity for participants to ask questions and give feedback. They are organized to facilitate the participation of large groups. Depending on the nature of the meeting, the IAP2 level of engagement is typically “Inform” or “Consult.”

Webinars are educational tools used to inform interested and affected parties of the planning process. The goal of webinars is to provide community members with the opportunity to learn about the project and upcoming engagement events, as well as ask project team members questions. The IAP2 level of engagement is “Inform.”

Workshops are structured, facilitated events in which participants are able to work collaboratively to reach the identified workshop goals and objectives. Workshops employ a combination of presentation materials (e.g., slideshows) and collaborative engagement materials (e.g., polls, online white boards) to receive feedback at key points in the planning process. They offer a transparent engagement environment in which participants are able

to collaborate, hear feedback from other participants, and understand how their feedback will shape the plan. The level of engagement is “Involve.”

Appendix C: Pre-Engagement Report

Prepared by SSG

March 2022

Introduction

SSG has undertaken a series of pre-engagement interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders to develop a cutting-edge Engagement Plan for the energy decarbonization pathways examination for the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission. These interviews helped us identify baseline knowledge about the project among stakeholders, preferences for engagement, stakeholder groups that might otherwise be missed, and other potential issues and opportunities for the engagement process. The goal was to connect with key stakeholders, thought leaders, and community influencers from a variety of groups to hear from diverse perspectives.

Pre-engagement is a best practice in engagement planning and design and is embedded in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) planning protocol, which is recognized as the global standard.

The objective of pre-engagement (in the form of interviews, focus groups, surveys, or other techniques) is to gather input from stakeholders on their engagement and communications preferences to help shape the project engagement design process.

SSG and the UTC Project Team identified stakeholder groups to engage and developed a shortlist of potential interviewees. UTC sought their consent to be contacted by SSG for a phone or Zoom interview. Interviewees included representatives of utilities and industry organizations, the construction sector, a municipality, and civil society organizations focused on climate change, clean energy, equity, and energy access.

SSG staff conducted 15 interviews with 27 individuals, by Zoom/phone, between March 1 and March 18, 2022. The following steps were taken in the interview process:

1. UTC staff identified potential interviewees from a variety of stakeholder groups based on SSG's recommended mix;

2. Interviewees were contacted for a phone/Zoom interview by SSG staff and provided a project backgrounder (Appendix 1) and questions (listed below) in advance;
3. Following the interviews, notes were shared with the interviewees to confirm they accurately reflected their input; and
4. Insights from those notes were incorporated into this summary to inform the engagement plan for the project.

Note: interviewees provide a window into the preferences of a particular stakeholder community and their opinions cannot be extrapolated to a larger sample size.

Interview Questions

SSG provided the following questions to each interviewee in advance and asked them during the interview:

1. What actions and policies do you hope will be included in the decarbonization pathways for Washington utilities?
2. What concerns, if any, do you have about this project?
3. Tell me how you think stakeholders will be engaged best? What, if anything, hasn't worked in other engagements you have seen?
4. What communications approaches do you think could be most successful in reaching people interested in this project?
5. Who is essential for us to speak with during this pre-engagement phase of the planning process?
6. Do you have any last thoughts or suggestions for us at this time?

Detailed Pre-Engagement Findings

The following qualitative analysis of the interviews summarizes stakeholder feedback by theme. Each theme summary concludes with the consultant's recommendation for the Engagement Plan.

Conduct engagement with a range of impacted communities.

Every single interviewee recommended the project engage diverse impacted communities, including utilities, businesses, and sectors involved in the low-carbon transition (such as the construction industry), local governments, relevant state government bodies, environmental and clean energy advocates, customers (businesses and households), equity advocates, and Native American communities.

"It's important to make sure you bring in newer voices. It's easier to bring the usual suspects to the table."

"Through processes like this, the entities that are the ones impacted, such as the businesses that have a financial stake in what happens in the future, have a concern that these top-down strategies are applied to them without their say and may affect their bottom line. Trying to make them partners and getting their ideas to guide how it will happen is a great opportunity."

Interviewees also indicated that it is important to engage impacted communities that aren't typically involved in regulatory engagement processes, as well as those who have deep knowledge of decarbonization technologies (e.g., for building electrification). One interviewee stressed that it is important to identify what voices might be missing during the engagement process and find ways to engage those groups.

A complete list of groups recommended by the interviewees for engagement is available in Appendix 2.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Identify key stakeholder groups that must be engaged for the project and develop a strategy to engage them.
- Early in the project, engage impacted communities that might be less inclined to participate in or absent from the process and elicit their concerns.

Tap into existing networks, organizations, and groups.

In over half of the interviews (9), interviewees recommended working with existing organizations, associations, and groups to gather feedback. Existing groups trusted by various stakeholders, such as business associations, community groups, and civil society organizations could help inform potential participants, in addition to providing input related to their sector. Multiple interviewees (including ones from utilities) recommended working with utilities to reach out to customers and/or engage existing utility working groups related to equity or low-income customers.

“To reach those groups that haven’t been involved in regulatory processes, work with smaller community NGOs to get the word out.”

“Nobody knows who or what the UTC is, but, if it’s a trusted community organization, then that message would be better received by the community.”

“There are a larger number of smaller community organizations that are newer to the table, concerned about environmental justice. Engage trusted messengers and bring people up to speed on the conversation so they can provide meaningful impact.”

One interviewee noted that she had previously participated in forums related to climate action that were largely white and largely professional. She said that tapping into community organizations and networks could help bring more diversity to the table.

“We ... work a lot with BIPOC communities and we work a lot with community reps within those communities. When we talk about the generic climate stuff, I, as an older white woman, am not going to resonate with a Somali or Ethiopian community. We need folks from those communities to bring that message forward to their communities.”

See Appendix 2 for a list of groups recommended by interviewees.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Identify organizations and individuals who can help reach out to impacted communities, especially those who are new to or have not previously been involved with UTC processes.
- Partner with organizations and individuals with strong networks to organize engagements, distribute information about engagement opportunities, and reach diverse stakeholders.
- Distribute information about engagement opportunities and conduct engagement activities in physical and digital spaces where impacted communities already congregate.

Transparency is essential.

Just over half of the interviews (8) highlighted the importance of transparency throughout the engagement process. They suggested the Commission communicate transparently about the project, engagement opportunities, key milestones, and the development of pathways.

“Stakeholders would be best engaged by an engagement process that is transparent, organized, and has some degree of flexibility. Also, a fixed reference point or somewhere that everyone can go for reference and information to learn about what stages have progressed and at what rate, and where to sign up.”

Additionally, interviewees from the utility sector and clean energy advocates said they would like data and modeling assumptions to be transparent. One interviewee explained that transparency would help with engagement by ensuring everyone understood the pathways and modeling process.

“I was on the advisory work group when the state developed the energy strategy. We were frustrated by the data transparency and the assumptions around different pathways. For example, it assumed a lot of imported energy, but didn’t identify where that energy would come from. So drilling down into the assumptions that go into the different pathways is important.”

“It’s hard to suggest actions and policies without the data, we need to know the data for the uses, the anticipated trajectories in different sectors and then you look at an action or policy based on the analysis.”

Interviewees also indicated that transparency would help build trust in the modeling and engagement processes, as participants would understand how the pathways were developed and how their input would be used. One interviewee suggested that all comments and responses be tracked in a public spreadsheet to ensure people felt their input had been considered.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Share information on data sources and modeling assumptions and conduct engagement activities to gather feedback on modeling assumptions from impacted communities.
- Publish information on the UTC’s website explaining the project, engagement opportunities, and key milestones.

- Clearly state how people can provide input and the timelines for doing so in all communications materials.
- Provide stakeholders with transparent information about how their feedback will shape the project to set clear expectations.

Accessibility—in terms of time commitment, location, and content—is critical.

Most of the interviews (10) indicated engagement activities should be accessible in terms of time commitment, location, and content. Interviewees explained accessibility would be essential to engage impacted communities across Washington who do not typically engage with the UTC or are not well-versed in the subject matter or UTC processes.

“Given that this is going to be statewide, the [UTC] needs to be deliberate about making sure they have geographic representation, they're meeting people where they are, and providing a variety of ways for people to contribute.”

“Sometimes, with the UTC, it can be challenging because of the formality of the regulatory systems; it can be challenging to bring people up to speed and integrate folks who are new to engaging.”

Interviews highlighted three key dimensions of accessibility. First, they suggested people with varying availability should have opportunities to engage. For example, meetings during the workday are not suitable for engaging those whose jobs do not make time for them to attend. Hours-long meetings, such as those in past UTC engagements, can also be tiring and hard to follow, especially for those outside of the utility sector.

“Many groups want to participate and get their voice heard, but the time and resources that it takes can be very resource intensive.”

“Whether it's on the website, calling in or in-person, there needs to be a variety of ways to reach out to people, rather than doing a four-hour marathon session to talk about this. [...] by the end of it you're just exhausted.”

“We have to have realistic expectations about how people will engage and how much. [...] Some people won't be able to respond, but they can be kept in the loop in an engaging and transparent way, even if it's just an email every few weeks letting people know what's going on and telling them about opportunities to engage.”

Second, interviewees said it is important to inform and gather input from impacted communities in physical and digital spaces that are accessible to them. Some interviewees (3) expressed concerns that the UTC's website and notification system are not user-friendly,

especially to those unfamiliar with the UTC. They suggested sharing information outside of the docket system and sending email updates that clearly explain progress on and changes to the project.

"[You] need to know who the audience you are trying to reach when creating a communication plan, which is thinking about language and access preferences."

"Is there a way to make the notices that go out more informative and engaging? Right now, if you sign up for a notification list, you get a very cryptic email every time something happens in the docket. And you can't tell what has changed. You have to dig up the notice and find out."

"The commission's website is clunky to use if you've never used it before, so if everything is going through the commission's website it might not be easy to access for those who don't know the docket number. If you want to reach some stakeholders who are not the experts ... I think you have to consider something outside the normal docket system. Whether you do legislative informational hearings or governor's office updates or through the UTC email updates, those mechanisms may allow you to reach a broader population."

Finally, interviewees said content must be presented in an accessible manner for the engagement process to be successful. They said that accessibility is shaped by a variety of factors, including the vocabulary used to engage potential participants and how and where information is presented. Interviewees also indicated that education would be essential for a successful engagement effort (see section on education below).

"When things are termed [...] in carbon emission reductions, it turns half the people off. It gets the policy or climate planners interested, but not the general public. But, when this is framed as a [health, safety, and equity issues], there'll be a broader range of folks that will want to engage."

"I think the Commission and the State need to do a better job of telling the story of what's happening so it's interesting."

Multiple interviewees (5) encouraged using approaches that have not been traditionally used by the UTC. For example, interviewees recommended presenting information in formats other than long, written documents. Interviews also noted that different engagement techniques should be used to reach diverse impacted communities (see section on diverse engagement techniques below).

“The framework [the UTC is] used to working through is ‘Here’s a 30-page summary of what we think based on 30 people we heard from.’ That works well for some people, such as executives and attorneys, but [the UTC needs] to move past that with this project.”

One interviewee noted that it is hard to find basic information, such as annual statistics on utilities, on the UTC’s website. She said that UTC previously posted annual statistics with basic information about utilities, including how many customers they have and what their annual sales are, but now refers people to the annual report. She said this made the information less accessible to the general public, as only people who are experts in the sector are likely to dig through the annual reports.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Map out key impacted communities and identify communication and engagement methods that are accessible to each of them.
- Identify impacted communities that may struggle to access information and engagement opportunities through the dockets system and identify physical and digital venues to engage them.
- Provide engagement opportunities that are accessible, in terms of time, location, and content, to impacted communities who do not traditionally engage with the UTC.

Educate impacted communities about the project and its potential impact.

Multiple interviewees (5) said that it is important to educate impacted communities who are not professionals in the utility sector about decarbonization, the utility sector, and the project to make it easier for them to participate in the conversation and provide meaningful input.

“If there was a meeting that was like ‘Gas utility regulation 101’, it could get people who are interested, but nervous about participating, a little more comfortable.”

“Take the time to talk through the state of the carbon-intensive industry, the desire to decarbonize, and what the impacts and benefits might be. ... Provide education for meaningful feedback.”

“We prefer to see a process that’s based on education surrounding the full picture of different greenhouse gas reduction strategies which also again include existing policies and directional priorities in Washington and other states that are similarly far along in considering these issues.”

“If we can get to a place where everyone is brought along in this conversation and understands the key modeling inputs, the better the conversation will be when it comes to the policy around the next steps—and huge implications—of the energy transition.”

One interviewee recalled a similar project in Oregon where the local commission held a “level-setting” conversation in which commission staff presented baseline statistics about gas utilities in Oregon, explained how rating works, and shared what they had heard from stakeholders so far. “That was really helpful to have upfront,” she said.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Inform impacted communities who are not professionals in the utility sector about decarbonization, the purpose of the project, and potential impacts of decarbonization.
- Hold events and develop clear, accessible materials to raise awareness among impacted communities about the project.

Consistent, timely communication is essential to keep impacted communities engaged.

Interviewees in almost half of the interviews (7) said it would be essential to communicate information related to engagement opportunities in a consistent, timely manner. Multiple interviewees indicated that inconsistent information and last-minute changes can hinder engagement.

“People are very attuned to not being kept in the loop on a good timeline. If you don’t get things to people until the morning of an engagement, folks may not be sympathetic.”

Interviewees also made specific suggestions about how to communicate information in a clear and timely manner. One suggested there be a clear way to sign up for engagement events and that participants should get a calendar invite by email right after they sign up. Another interviewee recommended there be a webpage that is easy to find, communicates how to sign up for meetings, and provides opportunities to give comments. A third interviewee suggested sending out regular emails about the project to keep stakeholders in the loop.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Communicate regularly with impacted communities about the project, key milestones, and engagement opportunities.
- Spread clear, accessible information about engagement opportunities through multiple channels.

- Create and regularly update a centralized, accessible webpage with information about the project and engagement opportunities.

Use diverse communication and engagement techniques.

Most interviews (9) emphasized the importance of deploying diverse communication and engagement techniques to reach impacted communities. Interviewees said diverse approaches are necessary to engage those who do not typically participate in UTC processes and ensure they are able to access those opportunities. Interviewees also noted that diverse approaches can ensure that people with varying levels of capacity have opportunities to participate. They emphasized that different approaches are suitable for different impacted communities.

Interviewees recommended a mix of engagement techniques to cater to those who want to dive into technical details, as well as those who want to provide higher-level input. For example, utilities and clean energy advocates are likely to be interested in providing detailed input into the modeling process, the data used, assumptions, and decarbonization actions. In contrast, members of the public might wish to provide higher-level input that is less technical. Interviewees said that the UTC's current approach to engagement works well for professionals in the industry but is less engaging for those outside of it.

"The people who've participated in the past tend to be into the weeds. They want deep data and numbers. They want to move through the issues quickly so they can dig into the weeds. Increasingly, there is also a contingent of folks who say, 'I need to be here at the table, and I need you to slow down. I can't constantly download information for two hours.' Keep in mind that both types of people show up and are pretty valuable in this process. People don't respond to 'Here's our agenda and we're going to talk for three hours and pipe in when you pipe in.' Collaborative agendas and face-to-face processes are helpful."

"Having key members identified to work through the technical detail and then having regular updates that are manageable by the larger community would be a good way to approach it."

"The utilities will need space to dive deep into analysis without being shut down."

Interviews recommended the UTC use a mixture of online and in-person engagement approaches. They said that online engagement is more accessible for those who cannot make it to physical venues, but in-person engagement makes it easier for diverse impacted communities to build rapport with one another and collaborate.

“Though virtual provides the opportunity for more people to join in conversations, in-person conversations flow better because it’s more personable, easier to build connections and find common ground.”

“I find engagement is a lot better in person. People are more engaged when they are in person.”

“We’ve tried to do a lot of breakout rooms [in virtual meetings], which can be somewhat successful, but true engagement with processes in the virtual world have been difficult.”

Interviewees recommended engaging impacted communities one-on-one, as well as through focus groups, workshops, and large group meetings. They also recommended providing participants with non-verbal methods of providing input, such as through surveys, digital whiteboards, or formal written submissions. One interviewee noted that the option to submit formal, written feedback is useful for those we cannot make it to meetings.

“I do think it’s important to incorporate multi-methods in engagement. Mural [online digital whiteboard platform] and things like that freak some people out—like utilities and attorneys used to a different format—but others find that exciting.”

At the same time, interviewees noted that small and large meetings have different advantages. For example, it can be difficult for some people to speak up or feel engaged in large groups. While smaller group activities may make it easier for participants to provide deeper input, large groups might be necessary to give diverse stakeholders opportunities to hear from one another and collaborate. One interviewee suggested engaging a “diverse, core group” of people for in-depth conversations over the course of multiple meetings, in addition to providing opportunities for one-off participation. Another interviewee suggested holding targeted engagements with specific impacted communities.

“In really big virtual meetings, it’s easy for people to sit back and listen and for a couple of voices to dominate. Small breakout groups of five people that are facilitated might get more perspectives. I have not seen breakout groups used much at the UTC. A lot of the docket talks are the commissioners talk, utilities talk, advocates talk, and then the commissioners talk.”

“What I’ve seen is that you can get these big tables and they collapse under their own weight. The team will need to be really deliberate to make sure that individuals have the opportunities to share their feedback.”

“Primarily, it should be bigger group conversations. It’s important to dig in with stakeholders individually from time to time. I do think from a transparency standpoint, it is important to have folks together in a room.”

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Undertake widespread and in-depth engagement with impacted communities. Use a mixture of engagement techniques in events that bring small and large groups of stakeholders together with the aim of obtaining deep and broad input while giving diverse stakeholders opportunities to collaborate and find common ground.
- Implement technical and non-technical engagement opportunities to enable diverse impacted communities to provide feedback.
- Arrange engagements directed at key stakeholder groups, including businesses, utilities, and civil society organizations, as well as engagements that bring diverse stakeholders together.
- Consider developing a project advisory committee that is representative of key impacted communities to provide input throughout the project.

Gather meaningful input while effectively using time.

Some of the interviewees described engagements in the past where their input had not felt meaningful or in which their time had not been effectively used. For example, some interviewees described situations in which input had been gathered even though the outcome felt predetermined. Another noted that, while open-ended conversations and engagements can be helpful for brainstorming, they may not generate focused feedback for the development of decarbonization pathways. A third stakeholder recalled participating in a multi-week stakeholder process in which he felt the same quantity and quality of input could have been gathered in one-on-one sessions or through gathering a few representatives together for an afternoon.

“It should be a judicious use of people’s time. Not having a lot of long meetings will be helpful.”

“Some stakeholder engagement activities have been perceived as ticking a box. You bring people to the table, you ask them questions, you record answers and then you’re done. That’s why I say people need to be educated about the issue and that there needs to be engagement with local community members who can bring people together.”

“It’s very helpful to try to focus people’s attention on the specific places where you think their input is crucial. [...] I appreciate when stakeholder time is used in a disciplined way.”

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Organize focused engagement activities and identify how each engagement activity will contribute to the project.
- Communicate to stakeholders about when and how their input will be gathered, as well as how it will be used.
- Make efficient use of time.

Create balanced spaces for impacted communities to provide input.

Multiple interviewees said it would be important to ensure that utilities do not dominate the engagement process. For example, one interviewee from a civil society group described a case in which about 10 people each from multiple utilities attended a public meeting. Although many of the utility representatives were there to observe and take notes, the utilities dominated the conversation and the situation left stakeholders new to the process hesitant to contribute.

“Being outnumbered by utilities all the time can make it undesirable to get involved. [...] And some folks on the advocacy side were new to the process and didn’t contribute. People new to the UTC are unsure when and how to speak up, so they don’t.”

In contrast, one interviewee from a utility described another case in which he had seen environmental groups dominate the conversation. Another noted that the engagement could “be very skewed” without “enough of a diverse representation.” A third interviewee said it would be important to create “balancing conversations and dynamics” in engagement spaces.

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Ensure stakeholders from the utility sector do not dominate engagements.
- Consider creating opportunities for impacted communities to provide input separately and in a group.

Polarization could negatively affect engagement.

Interviewees from utilities and environmental advocacy groups expressed concerns that engagement activities could become polarized in ways that could hinder discussion.

Interviewees noted that this project is highly political; engagement will involve groups that have conflicting opinions and views on decarbonization.

"The topic of climate gets everyone interested and passionate."

"It's going to be a very political process. It will be high-profile for advocates and gas utilities. Constructive conversations are going to be challenging. People will be charged. They will be in their corners."

Interviewees said that large group meetings can become polarizing spaces. An interviewee from a natural gas utility recalled a Zoom meeting on decarbonization in Oregon that "quickly got out of control" with participants becoming "negative" and "accusatory."

"The facilitators had to shut it off and received backlash for closing the public forum. It's a hard balance to strike because of emotions."

Interviewees from utilities and civil society organizations also expressed concerns that the engagement process could be or appear biased, which could increase polarization. "Many parties will have more of an anti-gas agenda," an interviewee from a natural gas utility explained. In contrast, an interviewee from a clean energy advocacy group worried that too much emphasis would be placed on emerging solutions like RNG and hydrogen rather than "cost-effective solutions" like energy efficiency retrofits.

"If the stakeholders are not feeling that the convener of the discussion is unbiased it can lead to contentious feelings in the process."

Both utilities and civil society organizations suggested that transparent disclosure and discussion of data and assumptions could help decrease polarization. One interviewee referenced the engagement organized by Gridworks in partnership with PG&E as a successful model for building community consensus for decarbonizing gas systems.⁷

"Lack of transparency and robust stakeholder discussion is a huge concern for me. Another concern is bias. I hope the analysis can remain neutral. It's important to have stakeholder engagement to provide input in assumptions and analysis. [...] Assumptions are absolutely key, so making sure there is transparency around assumptions would be super important."

⁷ Over a six-month period, PG&E and Gridworks facilitated engagement discussions with the project's Technical Advisory Committee, resulting in consensus among 14 diverse organizations that were previously in disagreement, engagements with 250 thought leaders and policymakers, and the adoptions of primary recommendations for engagement.

"We know it's going to be emotionally charged. It needs to be fact-based from both sides. You'll get some protectionism from the utilities, while others will be seeking the end of natural gas altogether."

"A transparent review of what's going on with modeling is important. The assumptions could be emotionally charged."

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- For engagement events, co-develop operating values with participants to include expectations that everyone will be treated with respect and establish the norm that those who do not comply will be removed.
- Identify concerns that could polarize conversations and develop a strategy for responding to them.
- Develop collaborative activities that enable impacted communities to raise their concerns and identify common ground.

Stakeholders value holistic analysis with consideration of equity and affordability.

Over half of the interviews (9) raised concerns about energy costs and affordability. Interviewees from across the spectrum said it would be important to consider how decarbonization could affect energy prices and, consequently, businesses and low-income communities; they raised concerns that high energy prices could increase inequality and energy poverty. One-third of the interviews (5) indicated it would also be important for the project to consider convenience and reliability of energy sources, especially in underserved, rural areas. Interviewees also said the project should consider the diverse urban, semi-urban, and rural settings in the state; rural low-income communities east of the Cascades are likely to be particularly affected by the transition to low-carbon fuels and increases in energy costs.

"Equity impacts are very important. We need to make sure we are not leaving low-income communities and communities of color behind. We need to help those folks transition to an electric system."

"For a lot of rural low-income folks who don't live in multi-family buildings, especially east of the Cascades, the cost impacts of [decarbonizing] the wrong way can potentially be dangerous."

Several interviewees said affordability (11) and equity (6) should be a key concern in the development of decarbonization pathways. Some interviewees indicated that a focus on

equity and affordability would be essential to keep the project on track and garner support for decarbonization. One interviewee recommended drawing on [a framework on equity and buildings](#) developed by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

“Promote policies that enable the entire energy systems to decarbonize, while maintaining energy resiliency, safety, and keeping energy costs affordable.”

“My other concern is that the efforts to decarbonize are going to result in short to medium term increases in cost. [...] without [consideration of costs], it gives the opponents of decarbonization a flag to wave and slows the process.”

“Take a client-focused approach to maintain affordability, but don’t let that be the enemy of decarbonization. Climate change disproportionately impacts low-income populations in the long-term. In the short term, we need to maintain a level of affordability during the transition.”

“It is important to apply an equity lens at every stage [...] When looking at community impacts, ensure [the analysis] encompasses health [...] Also, broaden the scope to look and consider how customer experience and communities will experience the decarbonization project, as well accommodate, recognize, and correct harms (present and future), and support equitable distribution [of] benefits.”

Interviewees also touched on the importance of ensuring marginalized communities can participate in the transition. For example, low-income communities likely need support for residential energy-efficiency retrofits.

“We’re really interested in how the gas and electric utilities integrate their systems and help customers transition to cost-effective decarbonization.”

“Some of these people are going to be able to make a transition through market incentives, but some are not. Figuring out how to address those who are least able to take advantage of market incentives is something that is very important to consider. In Washington, it’s going to have some interesting aspects in terms of an urban and semi-urban population and rural population, and these would need to be addressed in different ways.”

Finally, multiple interviewees focused on the importance of a holistic analysis of decarbonization pathways, including analysis of the relationship between and role of natural gas and electric systems, as well as consideration of diverse solutions, factors other than emissions reduction, and residential, industrial, and commercial uses of energy.

Interviewees recommended the analysis consider the positive and negative economic, health, and social impacts of decarbonization actions.

"It's important to take a holistic approach to decarbonization and approach it from a fuel- and technology-neutral standpoint. Gas utilities need to be set up for success in decarbonization."

"Considerations for jobs and labor are critical in every step in the transition of decarbonization, as we're moving away from GHG-intensive industrial activities and all forms of polluting industrialized activities."

"There are a lot of things about decarbonization that are hard to quantify—benefits and costs that can't be readily plugged into models. If these are hard to quantify, models typically leave them out. I don't think that works anymore."

"It's important to look at impacts and customer preferences. Customer choice and experience is highly important."

Engagement Plan Recommendations

- Educate impacted communities on the potential positive and negative impacts of decarbonization and share quantitative and qualitative analysis on potential impacts.
- Consult impacted communities on their vision for decarbonization and the social and economic changes they hope to see. Ask impacted communities about decarbonization actions and gather their input on potential positive and negative consequences.

Next Steps

Pre-engagement interviews are one piece of information to help inform the engagement plan. Additional sources include project initiation data from the project team and the scoping work of the project team. To complete the engagement plan, SSG will work with staff to map risks related to issues and stakeholder groups.

This initial step in engagement planning and design demonstrated a commitment to engagement best practices and the IAP2 global standard for community-centric engagement design.

Appendix 1: Project Backgrounder⁸



Alt Text: UTC logo

Overview

SSG is assisting the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission to develop pathways for decarbonizing energy utilities. These pathways will consider emerging technological, economic, and policy trends related to the energy system and renewable energy. This project will provide the Commission with strategies and actions for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and shifting to renewable energy. The analysis will evaluate the environmental, health, and economic costs and benefits to customers, equity considerations for low-income customers and highly impacted communities, and regulatory changes to facilitate the decarbonization of the services that gas utilities provide.

Technical Process

Utility decarbonization pathways will be developed through two main and interrelated work streams: technical analytics and engagement. The technical analytics team will undertake data collection, modeling, and data analysis to support the development of the pathways. First, they will calculate current utility emissions across Washington. Then, they will use SSG’s modeling technology to project “business as usual” (BAU) emissions out to 2050 according to current plans, trends, and regulations. The team will also develop decarbonization scenarios to analyze what measures need to be taken for the Commission to achieve its climate goals.

⁸ This document was used in the pre-engagement process. It will not dictate the project going forward.

Engagement

The engagement team will focus on engaging key interested and affected parties to ensure the decarbonization pathways examination includes appropriate actions that not only reduce emissions, but also advance other public goals, such as improving equity and reducing pollution. The team is currently developing the engagement plan, which will detail who will be engaged and how, as well as how to foster ongoing engagement, support, and participation in the implementation of decarbonization actions. The plan will incorporate a mix of online techniques depending on the needs of the target audiences. Insights from the engagement process will shape the aspects of the technical analysis that form the basis of the decarbonization pathways.

Appendix 2: Stakeholders Mentioned

Interviewees suggested engaging the following sectors, groups, and organizations:

Industry	Organization
Agriculture and food industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agricultural manufacturing facilities ● Food Northwest ● Washington Farm Bureau ● Washington Fruit Tree Association ● Washington Food Industry Association ● Washington Potato and Onion Association ● Washington Wheat Growers Association
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agriculture and food industry (see above) ● Appliance dealers ● Construction industry (see below) ● Energy-intensive industries and companies, including Kaiser Aluminum ● Financial institutions ● Hospitality industry ● Manufacturers ● Small businesses ● Organic waste industry
Business and industry associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Consumer Law Center ● Northwest Pulp & Paper Association ● Association of Washington State Business
Construction industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AGC of Washington ● Building Industry Association of Washington ● Companies working on conversions ● Home builders and home builder associations ● HVAC dealers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mechanical Contractors Association of Western Washington ● Northwest Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association ● Sheet metal contractors ● Washington Air Condition Contractors Association
Environmental organizations and clean energy advocacy groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate Solutions ● Front and Centered ● Northwest Energy Coalition ● Puget Sound Sage ● Washington Environmental Council
Equity and social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community organizations from across the state ● Equity-seeking groups and organizations, including climate justice groups ● Energy Equity Project ● Initiative for Energy Justice ● State Tribes ● The Energy Project at Opportunity Council ● Vulnerable communities ● Washington State Community Action Partnership
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attorney General's Office ● Washington State Department of Commerce and Energy Office ● Government agencies working on building codes ● Other states and jurisdictions with decarbonization goals ● Local governments ● Public Counsel Office ● Regulatory agencies
Laborers and unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Laborers including plumbers, pipefitters electricians, and operating engineers ● Labor groups and unions, including IBEW 77
Real estate industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building owners ● Realtors, including Washington Realtors ● NAIOP Washington State
Utility sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilities ● Bonneville Power Administration

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Gas Association • Northwest Power and Conservation Council • The Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas
Utility customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance of Western Energy Consumers • Commercial utility customers, including small-business owners and energy intensive industries • Residential utility customers, including low-income customers
Technical experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean building experts, including the Rocky Mountain Institute • Low Carbon Resources Initiative at Gas Technology Institute • Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance Project • Decarbonization technology experts and consultants within the decarbonization sector • Local universities • Regulatory Assistance Project
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone who filed comments on the proceeding docket • Rural and eastern Washington communities • State Tribes