Stakeholder Engagement

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3. Overview of Stakeholder Engagement in Utility Decision-Making
4. A Few Strategies for Robust Stakeholder Engagement
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Poll

How often have you engaged external stakeholders in your projects?

A. Regularly – it is a key part of my work
B. Occasionally – when a project requires it
C. Rarely – I've done it a few times
D. Never – I have not engaged stakeholders directly

Creating Opportunities for Robust Stakeholder Engagement

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Overview of Stakeholder Engagement in Utility Decision-Making

- Challenges Include:
  - Administrative and technical complexity of regulatory processes
  - Communities not engaged until the later stages of policy and program development
  - Inaccessible processes — for example, language needs (translation), meeting times, transportation, and accessibility for individuals with disabilities
- Robust and Meaningful Public Participation Includes:
  - Enabling capacity building and collaboration with communities
  - Encouraging diverse viewpoints
  - Careful planning and preparation
  - Inclusive and accessible policies and practices
  - Transparency and accountability mechanisms
  - Social and cultural responsiveness

A Few Strategies for Robust Stakeholder Engagement

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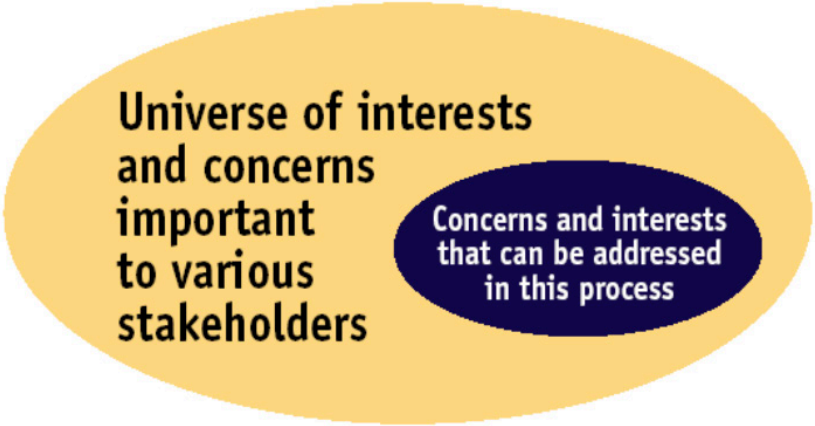
Establish a vision and plan for engagement

- Define the boundary of your engagement
- Identify engagement objectives
- Assess whether your objectives overlap with other engagement processes
- Develop Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) targets aligned with the objectives



(International Association of Public Participation, 2007)

Resources

- Inclusive Community Engagement Playbook, C40 Cities
- The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, Facilitating Power

THE SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP

Facilitating Power

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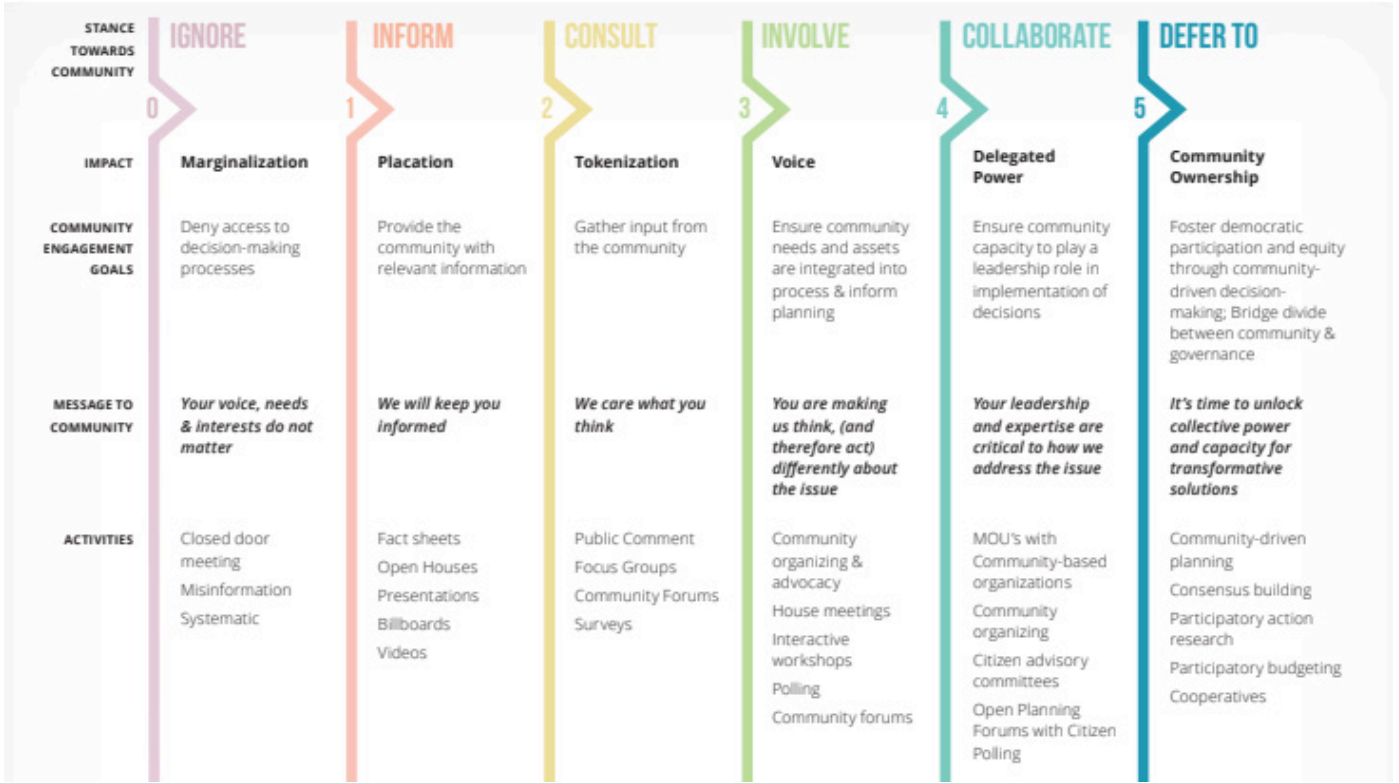

STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	IGNORE	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	DEFER TO
	0	1	2	3	4	5
IMPACT	**Marginalization**	**Placation**	**Tokenization**	**Voice**	**Delegated Power**	**Community Ownership**
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS	Deny access to decision-making processes	Provide the community with relevant information	Gather input from the community	Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process & inform planning	Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions	Foster democratic participation and equity through community-driven decision-making; Bridge divide between community & governance
MESSAGE TO COMMUNITY	***Your voice, needs & interests do not matter***	***We will keep you informed***	***We care what you think***	***You are making us think, (and therefore act) differently about the issue***	***Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue***	***It's time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions***
ACTIVITIES	Closed door meeting Misinformation Systematic	Fact sheets Open Houses Presentations Billboards Videos	Public Comment Focus Groups Community Forums Surveys	Community organizing & advocacy House meetings Interactive workshops Polling Community forums	MOU's with Community-based organizations Community organizing Citizen advisory committees Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling	Community-driven planning Consensus building Participatory action research Participatory budgeting Cooperatives

(Facilitating Power, 2019)

Establish a Vision and Plan for Engagement

- Use your key objectives and SMART targets to outline a stakeholder engagement plan
- Reference complementary plans or resources
- Determine the timeline of engagement
- Identify internal capacity and skills for implementation
- Determine whether additional training is needed
- Determine budget

Resources

- Elements of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, NYSERDA
- Planning Your Engagement Efforts, PennState
- Public Engagement Plans, templates and tools, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Public Involvement Plan Template, U.S. EPA

Ground Efforts in Community Context

Meet the Community Where They Are

- Collaborate with cultural brokers and community liaisons
- Consider taking meetings in neutral spaces or in a location identified by stakeholders
- Engage in other community events and initiatives
- Ensure engagement is culturally and linguistically relevant

Reminders for Entering a Community

- Entry: Start slowly. Understand the players and the power that is held. Inform people about yourself. Build some relationships. Ensure project is well-grounded.
- Principles:
  - Begin where the people are and respect their value system
  - Make broad contacts — not just at the top levels
  - Make sure you resist being the expert
  - Attempt to find out who has the power and credibility to mobilize and organize others into action

(City of Eugene, OR, 2011)

Resources

- Five Steps for Utilities to Foster Authentic Community Engagement, RMI
- Community Liaison Model: An Emerging Best Practice for Community Engagement at the Intersection of Climate and Public Health, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Ground Efforts in Community Context

Map and Analyze Stakeholders

- Stakeholder mapping can help you identify key stakeholders, including those who may be the most impacted by a decision
- There are various approaches to stakeholder mapping such as:
  - Stakeholder databases
  - Interest + influence matrices
  - Power analyses
  - Social network analyses

Interest and Influence Matrix

(Inclusive Community Engagement Playbook, C40 Cities)

Designing Engagement

Consider a Range of Engagement Tools

- Select tools that are consistent with your objectives, capabilities, and resources
- Consider whether these activities will be led by a trained facilitator

Engagement objective	Tool type	Example of Tool type	Description	Time	Skills	Resource	Worksheet
All	***Stakeholder database***		To keep track of the stakeholders you are seeking to engage with, how you will engage with them, and key communication.				
All	***Preliminary tools***	Ice-breaking mythbusters	These are tools that can be used in conjunction with other tools at the start of the session to introduce a topic and get to know the stakeholders.				External
Collaborate	***One-to-one***	Semi-structured interview Vox pops	This is an intimate form of engagement, that can take the form of an interview or vox pop.				External
Collaborate	***Small group***	Kitchen table discussion	These are often used for structured conversations around specific topics.				External
Collaborate	***Large groups***	Citizen assembly Participatory budgeting	Large groups can be a less time-consuming way to engage multiple people and communities at once, often used earlier in a plan/policy development to gather initial feedback.				External
Consult	***Surveys***	Intercept surveys	Surveys are a versatile engagement method, to gain feedback on specific questions.				

(Inclusive Community Engagement Playbook, C40 Cities)

Resources

- Community-Engaged and Participatory Methods Toolkits, Urban Institute
- Participation Tools for Better Community Planning, CivicWell
- Public Engagement Tip Sheets, Whitepapers and Reports, Institute for Local Government

Designing Engagement

Limit Engagement Fatigue

- Consider gathering stakeholder feedback on the engagement plan and make room for adjustments throughout the engagement process
- Identify other events or initiatives that may overlap your engagement process
- Collect and synthesize insights from other initiatives and public engagements
- If planning a workshop or meeting, consider presenting more complex issues earlier in the agenda
- Provide ample breaks and refreshments

Resources

- How to Limit Research Fatigue, Montana State University
- How Public Agencies Can Address Public Input Fatigue, People's Climate Innovation Center

Questions?

Applying Leading Practices for Stakeholder Engagement: Distribution System Planning Examples

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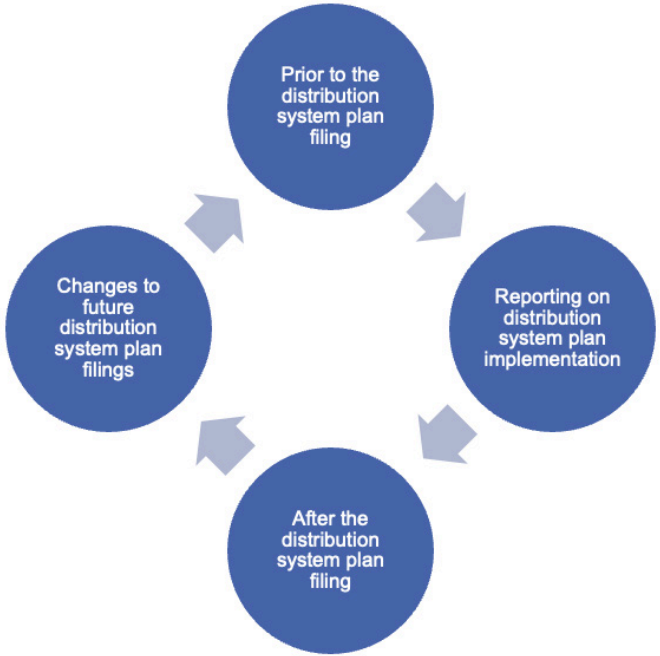
State requirements for stakeholder engagement in distribution system planning

- 13 states include provisions for stakeholder engagement in distribution system planning (CA, CO, HI, IL, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, NV, NY, OR, WA)*
- The majority of DSP stakeholder engagement requirements focus on the utility sharing information with stakeholders and providing an opportunity to offer feedback before filing the plan (CO, HI, IL, MA, MN, NY, OR, WA)
- Common actions include:
  - Specifying the minimum number of stakeholder meetings the utility must hold prior to plan filing (CO, IL, MA, MN, OR)
  - Requiring certain topics to be discussed at stakeholder meetings (CO, IL, MN)
  - Establishing working groups (DC, HI, WA)
- PUCs also may voluntarily host informational workshops as part of the distribution system planning process (MI, OR).



Requirements for utilities to engage stakeholders may apply at four points in the distribution system planning process

***Unless otherwise noted, all state references in this section can be accessed with links in the 1st bullet.** Minnesota reference is August 30, 2018, Order in Docket 18-251. available in Minnesota eDockets).

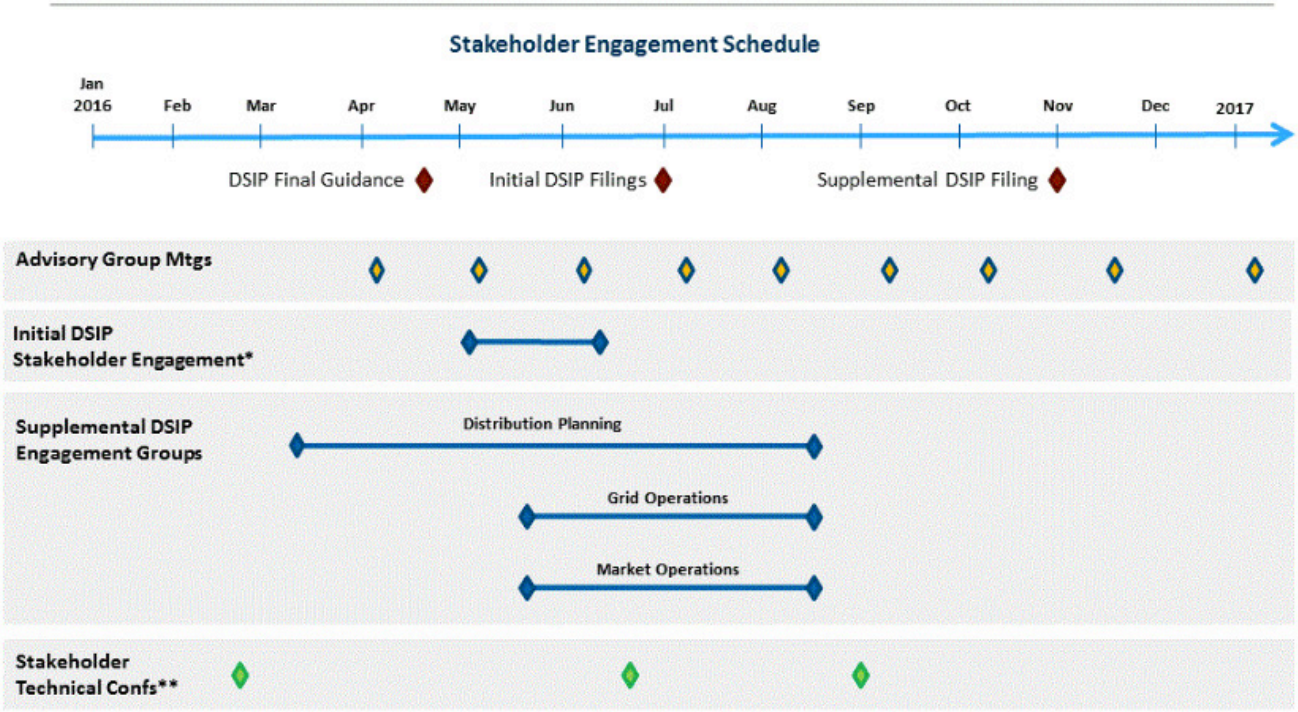
Stakeholder engagement when developing DSP requirements

	Pre-Launch	Phase 1: Baselining	Phase 2: Assessment	Phase 3: Refinement
Time-frame	February - March 2019	March 2019 – December 2019	January 2020 – May 2021	June 2021 - ongoing
Goal	Identify the focus of and process for a DSP investigation	• Begin developing a knowledge-base for the major DSP principles • Develop guidelines to evolve the smart-grid report into a robust (initial) distribution system plan	Review the current state of each utility's system, identify near- and long-term needs and next steps to get to optimization	Refine planning process, incorporate additional considerations and requirements
Process	• Staff whitepaper released: Outlines Staff proposal for DSP investigation. • Scoping workshop: Stakeholder feedback on Staff proposal i.e., establish whether OPUC has outlined the correct drivers, outcomes, phases, goals and deliverables. • Public meeting memo: Staff's final proposal requesting investigation.	Workshops: Staff will conduct a series of workshops to establish a baseline understanding of distribution system planning fundamentals, current utility processes, and outstanding distribution planning needs. • Draft guidance: Staff releases draft proposal for DSP guidance. • Stakeholder comments/ workshop(s) as necessary • Revised draft guidance • Final comments • Public meeting memo: Staff final proposal for DSP guidance.	• Establish individual utility dockets • Utilities file based on Commission guidance (~ 8 months) • OPUC and stakeholder engagement process (~ 6 months) ▪ Comments ▪ Workshops • Public meeting memo: Staff final recommendations (~April 2021)	• Continue to implement planning process as directed by Commission • Improve and evolve content, process, tools, and methodologies • Continue to incorporate evolving policy and operational requirements
Key Objective	Commission order opening investigation	Commission order adopting guidance for utilities to file initial DSPs	Commission orders accepting utilities' initial DSPs and direction to refine DSP process and/or DSP guidance	Commission approval of subsequent utility DSPs as determined during Phase 1 and guidance for refinement of subsequent utility DSPs

- Many PUCs engage stakeholders when developing DSP requirements, including when developing DSP goals and objectives.
- For example, in Oregon stakeholder engagement was prominently featured in development of DSP guidance.

Stakeholder engagement prior to DSP filings

- Nine states require regulated utilities to engage stakeholders before they file plans (CO, HI, IL, MA, ME, MN, NY, OR, WA).
- For example, the New York PSC adopted guidance for Distributed System Implementation Plans in 2016, directing that the utilities file a plan and timeline for stakeholder engagement during development of their first plans.



* Initial DSIP engagements dates based on individual JU workshop schedule during this period

** Stakeholder technical conferences to engage a wider set of participants to inform technical discussions and share Engagement Group results, as needed and in consultation with the Advisory Group

Reporting on stakeholder engagement

Several states require utilities to report on stakeholder engagement in filed plans — for example:

- Regulated utilities in Colorado must include a description of their stakeholder engagement process.
- In New York, PSC Staff guidance for 2023 DSIP filings recommended that each topical section (e.g., integrated planning, forecasting, grid operations, EVs, storage, energy efficiency, and clean heat integration) include information about stakeholder engagement.
- In Illinois, at the conclusion of required workshops on Multi-Year Integrated Grid Plans, the independent third-party facilitator submits a report to the Commission that describes the "stakeholders, discussions, proposals, and areas of consensus and disagreement from the workshop process."
- Least-cost procurement plans, filed with the Rhode Island PUC, require the Office of Energy Resources and Energy Efficiency and Resource Management Council to include minutes of public meetings and presentations made at Council meetings.

Source: FreePik

Stakeholder engagement after the DSP is filed

Source: Andrea Piacquadio

- The California PUC established the Distribution Planning Advisory Group to advise utilities on selection of distribution deferral opportunities and provide input on development of competitive solicitations for DERs to meet those needs.
- Minnesota PUC staff can determine if an additional stakeholder meeting is needed after the utility's IDP is filed to gather input.
- Oregon PUC staff holds ongoing technical workshops and a technical working forum to support collaboration between interested parties.

Stakeholder engagement when considering changes for future DSP filings

- As states and utilities gain experience with DSP processes, stakeholder engagement is evolving (e.g., HI, MA, MI, MN and NV) — for example:
- Nevada PUC requirements for NV Energy
  - Convene a process to address stakeholder concerns related to its 2022 Distributed Resource Plan
  - Collaborate with stakeholders on locational net benefits and non-wires alternatives analysis related to its 2022 Distributed Resource Plan update
- Based on feedback from stakeholder engagement in the distribution planning process, DTE created reliability improvement maps.

Exhibit 17.1.1 Electric Reliability Improvement Map (DTE Service Territory)

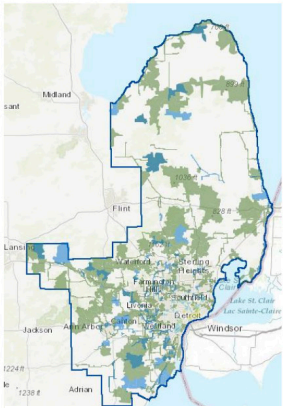
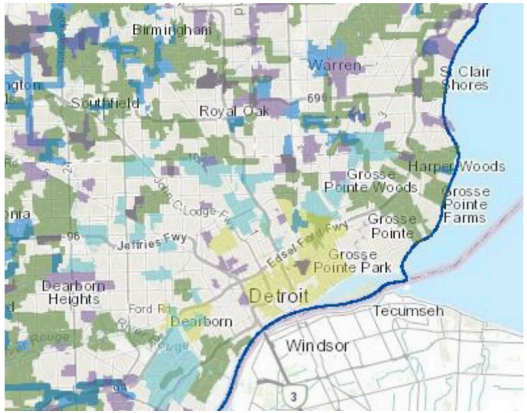


Exhibit 17.1.2 Electric Reliability Improvement Map (Metro Detroit)



	Tree Trimming	Tree limbs and branches are responsible for nearly 70% of the time our customers spend without power. That's why we're surging our efforts to trim overgrown trees in your neighborhood to keep you safe and the energy grid reliable.
	Strengthen Power Lines	We're upgrading and strengthening power lines to ensure the electric system in your neighborhood is more resilient and reliable.
	Utility Poles Maintenance	We're inspecting and repairing utility poles and replacing cross arms and other pole top equipment to ensure our system delivers the power you need when you need it.
	Rapid Response	Tree trimming and pole top equipment repairs/replacements to quickly improve reliability in communities experiencing emergent issues in between planned maintenance schedules.
	Modernizing & Rebuilding the Grid	Modernizing electrical substation equipment, as well as the underground and overhead infrastructure that delivers power to you, including replacing poles and wiring. Tree trimming will be completed, as necessary, in advance of pole replacements.

Source: DTE Electric

Example improvements for stakeholder engagement — Minnesota

The Minnesota PUC provided guidance on stakeholder engagement in orders on Xcel Energy's 2021 and 2023 Integrated Distribution Plans (IDPs) (Dockets M-21-694 and M-23-452)

2021 IDP - Required Xcel Energy to **file a summary of the stakeholder process for its next IDP and list next steps** by August 2023

- The PUC **required at least four stakeholder** meetings. The utility held six meetings to cover all of the content in the plan.
- Stakeholder workshops **generated ideas for Xcel on several topics**.
  - How to prioritize projects
  - Reflecting distribution system constraints in forecasting
  - Reflecting benefits of distributed PV for reducing system peak
  - Considering multi-value projects

2023 IDP - Required Xcel Energy to:

- Host additional **stakeholder discussions on cost-benefit analysis approaches** and include results of conversations in 2025 IDP
- **Collaborate with stakeholders to refine the planned net load methodology,** evaluate alternative approaches, evaluate seasonal dependability factors and alternative planned net load approaches with stakeholders, and **report on results in the 2025 IDP**
- Conduct robust **stakeholder outreach** including DER owners/operators and **file a description of stakeholder engagement process, materials used to inform stakeholders about DERMS [DER management system], feedback received and how the utility addressed it**

Example improvements for stakeholder engagement — Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) suggested improvements to stakeholder engagement in its recommendations to the electric utilities.

- Develop goals and clear reporting on metrics of success to measure the efficacy of proposed stakeholder engagement
- Include the Clean Energy Stakeholder Advisory Group (CESAG) within the Advisory Council, possibly within the Equity Working Group
- Develop specific and consistent definitions of equity and adopt quantifiable reporting metrics

In response, the utilities "**incorporated meaningful revisions to their Electric Sector Modernization Plans** [ESMP]" and provided responses and explanations for each GMAC recommendations. The utilities ultimately **adopted four of the five GMAC stakeholder engagement recommendations, with modifications**.

The Department of Public Utilities found that the EDCs **complied with stakeholder engagement requirements** and noted that they expect the companies to make "**appropriate efforts to invite stakeholder feedback on their ESMP approaches**" and engage with the CESAG on improvements and lessons learned.

"The EDCs [electric distribution companies] are fully aware of the importance of vetting these ESMPs with stakeholders and community organizers, both during their development, and through their future implementation."

Source: EDC filing

Questions?

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