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Workshop 2 Notes

On February 12, 2020, the Oregon Public Utilities Commission hosted the second workshop in the Investigation into Distribution System Planning (UM 2005). The workshop focused on principles of distribution planning, stakeholders' key questions about distribution planning, and utilities' current distribution system planning practices and plans. Gridworks provided facilitation services.

Approximately 30 participants were in attendance in person and on the phone. Organizations represented included Community Energy Labs, Energy Research Cooperative, Energy Trust of Oregon, Idaho Power, Northwest Energy Coalition, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board, Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Public Utilities Commission, Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association, Pacific Power (PacifiCorp), Portland General Electric, Renewables Northwest, Spark Northwest, and Vote Solar.

Principles for Distribution System Planning: Participants each shared a principle for distribution system planning (DSP). Common themes among principles shared were consolidated into the following working principles for Oregon:

- DSP should be based on a common, transparent framework.
- DSP contributes to decarbonization.
- DSP enables and promotes customer participation, choice and education.
- DSP enables cost-effective, reliable and resilient service.
- DSP value assessments recognize a range of perspective, comprehensive benefits/costs, risk, and the need to prepare the grid for the future.
- DSP promotes equity and fairness acknowledging the impacts and needs of customers and communities are evolving.

Key Questions about the Current State of Distribution System Planning: Participants shared questions about the utilities' current DSP processes and plans. Key questions will provide an anchor point for stakeholders to refer back to throughout the DSP investigation to check that their concerns are addressed. Gridworks categorized the questions for organization purposes after the workshop.

Distribution System Plans

1. Over what time frame do the utilities plan?
2. What considerations are made in strategic asset planning (e.g., financial value, etc.)?
3. How do utilities intend to structure and prioritize DSP functions to minimize duplication?
4. How are the voice of the customer and different types of customers accounted for in DSP?

Grid Modernization

5. How are distribution and transmission system upgrades a part of DSP?
6. What is the connection between DSP and grid modernization (e.g., technologies to provide visibility and control, communication protocols)?
7. What are the major challenges utilities are facing in modernizing?

Relationship with Distributed Energy Resources and Load Forecasts

8. How are interconnection and capacity related/addressed in this process?
9. What do the utilities think of distributed vs. centralized control systems?
10. How are electric vehicle and distributed energy resources (DER) forecasts accounted for in DSP?
11. What are the data sources for load growth and DER adoption in DSP?
12. How is the locational value assessment of DER accounted for in DSP?
13. How are behind the meter assets accounted for by DSP?
14. How is load growth being accounted for, particularly with building code impacts at some sites?
15. How does DSP interact with customer programs, whether they be utility or third party led?

Relationship with other regulatory processes

16. How are DSPs related to performance based ratemaking proposals?
17. How are data and insight between DSP and Integrated Resources Planning shared?
18. How will DSP as a docket intersect with dockets on wildfire and resilience? How will this process treat climate change, its impacts and wildfire?

Utility Presentations on Distribution System Planning Practices and Plans: Pacific Power, Portland General Electric, and Idaho Power each presented on their current distribution system practices and plans. Presentations are posted to the docket UM 2005. There was informal discussion and questions after each presentation.

The primary purpose of the presentations was to provide stakeholders a baseline understanding of the current state of distribution system planning. However, the presentations began to answer some of the key questions noted above, such as distribution plan time horizons (5-10 years) and data sources for load growth and DER adoption (coordination with city departments). Following workshop three Staff will review the presentations from workshops two and three, as well as the key questions noted above and note which have been addressed.