

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

Equity Working Group (EWG)

MEETING MINUTES

Monday March 24, 2025

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members Present: Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation (chair); Julia Fox, Department of Energy Resources; Chris Modlish, Attorney General’s Office; Kyle Murray, Acadia Center; Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance; Jollette Westbrook, Environmental Defense Fund; Mary Wambui, Planning Office for Urban Affairs

Non-Voting Members: Erin Engstrom, Eversource

Members Absent: --

DOER Staff Present: Colin Carroll, Aurora Edington

Consultants Present: Tim Woolf, Aidan Glaser Schoff, Synapse

1. Call to Order

Kathryn Wright, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

Chair Wright took roll call and gave an overview of the agenda.

3. Meeting Minutes Review and Voting

Chair Wright called for approval of the minutes. Kyle Murray provided the motion to approve. Larry Cretien seconded. The February 20, 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

4. CESAG Updates

Erin Engstrom presented on the Community Engagement Stakeholder Advisory Group (CESAG.)

Erin Engstrom: All CESAG members had been chosen. The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 28 at National Grid's sustainability hub. The first meeting will contain level setting, framework, rules, and what folks want to bring to the table for feedback on the framework. Developing guidelines for the group and cadence / engagement framework for the group. ASG is working on kick-off slides. They will inform the EWG with updates so that folks can stay informed.

Chair Wright: Is there any adjustment to timeline?

Erin Engstrom: It's the same timeline, with the meeting being just within Q1. The proposed timing is still applicable. It should be four meetings of half-day sessions, with two meetings per month over the course of four months. It would be up to the CESAG to determine if this should be altered. EDCs are excited to start working with the groups and their expertise. The timing laid out in the ESMP for the minimum time required for the process should hold. This timing is also how ASG's contract is structured.

5. National Grid EWG Membership Request

Chair Wright presented on expanding the EWG Membership to include National Grid.

Marc Lucas (National Grid): Thank you for this opportunity. I've been a limited participant as a member of the public in these meetings. There are times where I would have loved to provide information in real time. I am very happy to have Erin Engstrom represent the EDCs and she has been doing a fantastic job. The EDCs have very different customer profiles and are not a monolith. Having a different voice would be helpful. I lived in an environmental justice community for several years. I have worked at National Grid for seven years, and prior to that at Eversource for 16 years. I would love to have an opportunity to speak to what is presented here in real time. I hear the conversations, but I can't react to it. The EDCs are not monolithic, and I believe having a different voice, not speaking on behalf of Unital, would be helpful.

Chair Wright: I'd like to share publicly some feedback I have provided to Andrew directly. The EWG is set up to have a structure comparable to the Executive Committee. That was the rationale behind the decision to have one EDC representative since the group responds to joint proposals and the joint ESMPs. As such, I think a single EDC representative is appropriate now; if National Grid is added, would we also need Unital? We'd have to rethink the entire structure. I think rotation of EDCs represented in the space may help resolve the issues raised by Marc.

Larry Chretien: Marc is certainly qualified. We need to review joint proposals from the EDCs. We are not the DPU and don't have the time to look at every proposal. I don't see huge differences between National Grid and Eversource. This should be resolved within the EDCs. Also, overall across the gas and electric utilities, not having joint proposals has slowed down progress on various measures.

Larry Chretien left at 10:19.

Mary Wambui: This is the first time coming across this presentation since I am not a member of the GMAC. Agreed with Larry. It's not about the qualifications; it's about acknowledging the number of processes where EDCs have influence and control – this space would become unbalanced.

Chair Wright: This is the first public conversation about this. National Grid reached out over email, and we included wanted to include this on our agenda before presenting it to the GMAC.

Erin Engstrom: I know Mary works on the EEAC EWG. Is there anything you would add based on the structure of that group?

Mary Wambui: The EEAC Equity Working Group formed under very different circumstances. There are seven voting councilors and four non-voting program administrators. On the EEAC EWG, I would be firmly opposed to adding an EDC, based on my three years of experience.

Julia Fox: Based on our by-laws, we have two-year membership, which would come up in September. Members would have to be renominated or approved or there could be other nominees - this is another opportunity to adjust the composition. What is the status quo for collaboration among the EDCs before and after the EWG meetings?

Erin Engstrom: I send materials to the EDC subgroup on equity and stakeholders. I ask for input. I share what's on the agenda, and then I get feedback and articulate feedback. I am careful to state if an opinion is specific to Eversource rather than across the EDCs. I think we have good coordination, but this is targeted at having an additional perspective.

Marc Lucas: Thank you for that Erin. The stakeholder process should not be filtered. I'll respect the decisions of the group. The principle of it all is to have direct conversations in real time. This is why I think this proposal has value. Our organizations must rely on Erin to address concerns in real time on behalf of the EDCs.

Chair Wright: Thank you for sharing that. In recognition of the further conversations, we need to have, I will recognize Mary and Kyle and close this topic within the next five to eight minutes.

Mary Wambui discussed the number of program administrators present on the EEAC EWG.

Kyle Murray: One of the reasons we limited to one representative from the PAs is that the PAs can overwhelm the conversation in the main meeting. (Kyle serves on the GMAC Executive Committee).

Chris Modlish: I'll echo what others have stated. I do not question his qualifications at all, but I don't believe we need another EDC representative.

Jolette Westbrook: I do support the idea of rotating members if that is what the group wants. The EDCs can make that decision. They can have Marc take a seat or apply to a seat when the term ends. I don't think adding a member has to be done because there are pathways outside of the meetings for the EDCs to get together and talk. The EDCs can raise views at that time. They may not have the same position, but the idea is for the EDCs to coordinate and work together. I support the comments others have made.

Chair Wright: I believe all the voting and non-voting members have presented. I have taken copious notes on this conversation. I will prep to update the GMAC on Thursday to discuss next steps on the by-laws and will report back on that.

Larry Chretien returned at 10:30.

6. ESMP Metrics and Reporting

a. Filing Overview

Tim Woolf presented on the ESMP Biannual Reports.

b. Discussing EWG Comments

Chair Wright: We'd like to discuss this with you all. The GMAC needs to vote on these comments to submit. We would like to get this as far as we can before presenting to the GMAC. Did anyone not get a chance to at least skim these comments? Based on the lack of hands, I assume everyone viewed this at least once. Is there anywhere that anyone thinks we missed anything, or had other edits? Does anyone have any major structural changes that we need to make? If anyone has high level comments, we can start there.

Julia Fox: Maybe we can go through each section in order.

Chair Wright provided an overview of the Procedural section of the draft comments.

Jolette Westbrook: I don't have rephrasing. I want to emphasize that getting direct feedback via survey or other means is vital. To have something that will allow people who are most affected have their thoughts and concerns incorporated is so necessary. I support another means of providing direct feedback.

Chair Wright provided an overview of the Distributional section of the draft comments.

Jolette Westbrook: Is it the intention that executed CBAs would be posted on a dashboard or somewhere that is easily accessible?

Chair Wright: We were proposing that it be added as a metric, which would minimally be reported in the biannual reports. The second part is a request have information that is an excel document be provided in a dashboard or something else that is easier to use. We provided a dashboard example from Hawaii. We can provide examples of things that are working well regarding communication of data to the public if others have any examples to share.

Chair Wright provided an overview of the Recognition/Structural section of the draft comments.

Mary Wambui: My response is on the previous section. I wanted to say that transparency is really important in community benefit agreements. That disclosure of benefits and something is visual is very important. Otherwise, it will be business as usual.

Chair Wright provided an overview on the table in the draft comments.

Mary Wambui: I have a question to the EDCs. Are you planning to have metrics developed by the CESAG at any point in the future as a result of the more in-depth community-based participation?

Erin Engstrom: It's not something that we've proposed right now. The goal of the CESAG is to develop an engagement framework that we can all utilize. What comes out of the framework is TBD and up to the CESAG to determine. We wanted to provide the opportunity to provide for the CESAG members to provide input on next steps as well.

Chair Wright: Is there openness in the EDCs to keep space in the biannual report open for future recommendations?

Erin Engstrom: There is room the draft biannual report to provide narrative updates on the CESAG, as proposed. If you have comments on this, as part of this process in front of the Department right now. We have developed our proposed framework. We'll see what the Department comes out with in their order. I don't know what the process is, and I have to check with the lawyers to see how things get added or updated in the reports.

Chair Wright: I want to get a sense from other members who didn't yet comment.

Kyle Murray: At a high level, it's really good. I appreciate all the hard work. I don't have any comments.

Larry Chretien: I agree with Kyle. I appreciate all the time that went into this. I will support it going forward.

Jolette Westbrook: I echo what has been said. Thank you for the chart at the end. I think it's really important that threads such as economic development and health not be lost, and the chart keeps those issues in the forefront.

Chris Modlish: I support the current format and main message being communicated. I can provide some written feedback ASAP, but I support as a high level right now.

Chair Wright: Feel free to sit with this and provide written feedback before we share a draft with the GMAC.

Julia Fox: I want to commend Kathryn to get these comments drafted and incorporate all the feedback we've had since 2023. We want to make sure we have better biannual reports. Apologies that it came in late on a Friday. GMAC will be voting to approve that these comments can be provided publicly. An intervenor can recognize these comments if the GMAC supports having these comments public. DOER intends to do so.

7. MassCEC: Grid Services Study / Compensation Fund

Sarah Cullinan, MassCEC, presented on the Massachusetts Grid Services and DER Compensation Study and asked for feedback on the outreach plan and the information presented.

Larry Chretien: I'm going to take this back to see if someone else in the organization can spend time on this. I support the idea of having the state provide information on grid modernization. Having comments and facts consolidated so we can view them and be transparent. I would say looking at some of the comments, it's not a zero-sum game. We can make sure that there is not cross-subsidization. Supporting DG could be a win-win and that's what we look forward to.

Sarah Cullinan: There are a lot more slides and details out there with technical details behind all of this. Doing all the digging in and understanding is a big investment of time, and we'd welcome your participation if you have capacity.

Chair Wright: Thinking about outreach, what is the makeup of who has been to the public workshops? I think developers working on community groups on community solar, microgrids, and CCAs to an extent can have different perspectives than some of the larger developers.

Sarah Cullinan: The DG DER community is very vocal and has been present. The Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) has been on our invite list. I'm not sure if they have made it. I don't think we have captured microgrids. There may be additional stakeholders to fit into this discussion. We've had the big DG DER folks and aggregators; we've had building owners and developers who own buildings who participate.

Mary Wambui: I have participated in one stakeholder event. People like me and people that I know may not be able to participate due to information asymmetry. Just because if we have seen a few people from the EJ world are there, it may not necessarily mean that their perspective is taken into account in the final product.

Sarah Cullinan: Mary, do you have any suggestions?

Mary Wambui: We don't know what you are talking about regarding what you are presenting. I assume that there are smart people in this group that can provide plain language for participants. Something that helps people understand and participate.

8. Closing/Adjourn

Chair Wright presented on closing and next steps. Noted, the next GMAC meeting is Thursday, 3/27/25.

The meeting adjourned at **11:32** a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Aidan Glaser Schoff

Synapse Energy Economics

Meeting materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Draft comments