



## Regional Technical Forum

### RTF PAC Meeting Minutes

May 24, 2023

1:00pm – 2:30pm Pacific

#### Meeting Participants:

Debbie DePetris, Clark County PUD (Co-Chair)

Ginny Burdick, Oregon Councilmember (Co-Chair)

Dan Adams, Avista Corp

Kary Burin, Cascade Natural Gas

Jennifer Finnigan, Seattle City Light

Suzanne Frew, Snohomish PUD

Fred Gordon, Energy Trust of Oregon

Jeff Harris, NEEA

Jamae Hilliard Creecy, BPA

Mark Jerome, CLEAResult

Peter Kernan, OR PUC

Jennifer Light, NWPC and RTF Chair

Jennifer Langdon, Cowlitz PUD

Amy Milshtein, notetaker

Mary Moerlins, NW Natural

David Moody, BPA

Will Mulhern, ODOE

Quentin Nesbitt, Idaho Power

Elizabeth Osborn, WA Department of Commerce

Craig Patterson, independent

Juan Serpa Muñoz, EWEB

Jason Talford, Idaho PUC

Matt Tidewell, PGE

Laura Thomas, RTF Manager

Danie Williams, NorthWestern

Alan Zelenka, ODOE

#### Key Outcomes:

At the Q2 RTF Policy Advisory Committee Meeting, members discussed the following:

- First Quarter 2023 progress at the RTF and discussion focused on the plan update to the RTF Guidelines.
- RTF 2024 Work Plan to gather early input from the RTF PAC about potential areas of focus for next year. Members provided feedback that new measures with significant savings was a top priority and expressed continued support for the RTF's work on demand response and energy efficiency interactions.
- DOE Inflation Reduction Act and the potential to develop a tool to support the modeling path for funds. Members expressed potential interest in the RTF, but had some follow up questions for the DOE and state offices to help inform a further discussion on this topic.

#### Discussion:

RTF PAC Co-Chair Ginny Burdick, Oregon Councilmember, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm by welcoming the body to the Q2 meeting. She also introduced Co-Chair Debbie DePetris, Clark County PUD.

Laura Thomas, RTF Manager, called for introductions. Burdick asked if there were any proposed changes to the March 28, 2023 minutes. There were none and the minutes were approved.

### ***RTF 2023 Work Plan Progress***

Thomas presented first quarter RTF accomplishments and planned work for the rest of the year.

Slide 10

Jeff Harris, NEEA, asked if the proposed Guidelines review will include a look at the current practice baseline. Jennifer Light, NWPCC & RTF Chair, said the update will be limited to broadly including equity during evaluations, adding that this came directly from the 2021 Power Plan. She expected the work to be a light touch and suspected there would be a broader Guidelines review next year.

Light added that current practice baseline would be a Council decision and not an RTF or RTF PAC decision and offered to talk more offline.

### ***RTF 2024 Work Plan Discussion***

Thomas presented an initial discussion about possible 2024 RTF topics.

Slide 14

Fred Gordon, Energy Trust, asked why there are only four new electric measures expected. Thomas said there are five measures with allocated resources in the queue and another has been submitted.

Light suggested not focusing on that number as there might be room for more as the RTF gets a better sense of how much bandwidth the analysts have. She pointed to a natural ebb and flow of UES measures and the knowledge that there would have to be time to develop new tools. Light suspected the number might change.

Slide 15

Gordon thought there would be opportunities for new research as he is hearing interest from Oregon utilities and the PUC as they look at the cost of landing new renewables and their accompanying transmission build.

Gordon then called learning how demand response and efficiency interact a high value item for Energy Trust.

Light said Thomas will have to look at how to best use meeting time. She pointed to time needed for analyst and contractor to build out measures and then present to the RTF. Light offered to help Thomas sort the 28 measures and determine what will need a big lift as opposed

to small changes. Light hoped this will free up space for new measures, adding that Gordon is not the only person with that need.

Thomas thanked Light, saying she was conservative in choosing four new measures but understands that it would be appropriate to add more. Light then said it would be good to have new measures to feed into the Council's next Plan. Gordon emphasized that he is only interested in measures that would produce a volume of savings and is not interested in just "making work." Thomas thought there were measures in the queue that would fit that requirement.

Harris was interested in exploring demand response and load flexibility with the RTF's new tools. He asked if the tool would be applied to existing measures across the board or just to certain, individual ones. Thomas pointed to a tool the contractor developed that added a framework for testing on existing measures, especially ones like weatherization, where there is a clear opportunity.

Thomas then moved to modeling tools, saying the DR modeling and the Residential Energy Efficiency and Demand Response (REEDR) tool will be applied to new and existing residential measures if it is appropriate. Light said looking at EE/DR interactions will also happen on commercial measures. Light then told Harris it will probably start with a look at the interactions between Air Source Heat Pumps, weatherization, and DR, praising Cadeo's mapping process.

Burdick thanked Thomas for her work, saying she is looking forward to her draft work plan. Light requested RTF PAC members ask their teams for appropriate measure ideas.

### ***DOE Inflation Reduction Act Update***

Slide 21

Jamae Hilliard Creecy, BPA, approved of a simple tool, but cautioned that simple is in the eye of the beholder. She asked if DOE indicated that there is no existing national tool that could be modified to save time and effort. Hilliard Creecy then asked if the Contract Analysts thought it would be simple to create, or if it would be simple for potential users to operate.

Thomas indicated that the DOE does not think there is an existing tool, though they are doing some scoping. She said they reached out to the RTF because of previous, successful work. Thomas then addressed simplicity, saying the intent is to make the tool easy for program implementers to use. She acknowledged that 20% energy savings is a high target which might require more information about a home to achieve. Thomas concluded by reporting the CAT's opinion that the tool could be Excel based.

Hilliard Creecy agreed that 20% energy savings seems high, and suggested the tool outline what would be needed to get there. Light referenced a past, RTF CAT-created tool that asked for simple factors like age of home, type of foundation, and window type, to get close to assessing building shell quality.

Slide 22

Quentin Nesbitt, Idaho Power, called it odd that the DOE would not have their own tool and came to the RTF. He asked if this was a contract and if other states would use it or if it was only for our Region.

Thomas answered that the DOE was exploring if this is feasible, noting that they are still compiling their IRA guidance. She then said that there is a potential to reach out to DOE to determine what funding and technical support they could provide, cautioning that there was no guarantee, but optimistic that they were open to the question.

Thomas noted that they could use RTF funds and build a tool specifically for the region as long as it doesn't offset current priorities. She said DOE wants to support the states with their IRA guidance but wanted a tool for added flexibility. Thomas concluded by saying this was a unique moment to discuss DOE funding and support for this potential project.

Nesbitt called this "a bit half-baked" on DOE's part. Thomas noted that CA has a similar program.

Gordon thought this was a decision for state energy offices and not RTF funders, adding that Energy Trust finds the idea interesting. He called home performance a great tool for contractors working on small jobs for high-end customers to increase their profit margins, conceding that it works in places with higher rates and higher loads.

Gordon wondered how the region can check this box as cheaply as possible, saying customers are not interested in empirical home scores. He called for a dialog on creative paths to meet this requirement without wasting money.

Hilliard Creecy added that the DOE is and wondered what level of the agency is asking for this help. She noted that the DOE also has skilled employee, stressing that she is not suggesting the RTF shouldn't or couldn't do the work, but wondered why they were looking outside their organization.

Nesbitt said he has run into the DOE not being fully behind a project or their low-income weatherization programs not matching up with what the state requires. He added that the potential for problems seems high.

Jennifer Finnigan, Seattle City Light wrote in the chat that ICF, and other consultants, have tools that can do this. And "the 20% savings bar is high. Any tool, to ensure savings, will more likely require actual delivered savings that are more like 22% or more - raising the bar even higher." She also asked, "is this tool for the region or the US" and wrote, "it would feel better if DOE paid for development of a tool," in the chat.

Elizabeth Osborne, Washington Department of Commerce, thought the state energy office would be interested in learning more, adding that the concerns are important and should be addressed with the people at WA Dept of Commerce. She said she would talk to her colleagues and share feedback.

Thomas thanked her, assuring the room that today's intention today was to engage and explore the topic. Light said she would bring the RTF PAC's questions and concerns to the DOE and follow up offline. She reminded the room that the DOE approached the RTF, which speaks to the body's credibility and value. Light called this a reason to be proud and dig in further.

Harris asked about back-end processing and linking to the DOE and a state-level funding mechanism. He asked what it would take to create a turnkey tool that served DOE funds, states, and end-use customers. Thomas said a tool allows programs to have that consistency and this tool would as well.

Harris asked about a certification process, noting that with Federal funds there is the possibility for fraud. Thomas said they would also have to see if the REEDR calibrated data set meets DOE minimum requirements.

Mary Moerlins, NW Natural, said no matter who creates the tool there is need for this information. She stressed the need to be engaged with the creation, as an owner or on the consultative side to best navigate the IRA and other funding streams. Moerlins again said the tool is needed and the questions are who, how, and how much.

Will Mulhern, ODOE, agreed that they would find this tool useful. He reported asking DOE about flexibility with the model approach, wondering if they could use existing programs or tools, adding that they have not heard back yet. Mulhern said a strict modeling approach would require a tool like this for program administration but had no opinion on who should design or build it.

Burdick thought that it would be beneficial to the DOE if the RTF did something credible for the region, which in turn could help secure help with the funding. She called front-end funding in line with the program's mission. Thomas agreed that funding is a key piece, adding that the Region may be a step ahead of others when it comes to getting calibrated data so we can focus on the tool piece.

Gordon noted that many of RTF products are used all over the world but very few locations have our Region's level of data sets so it might not be as useful. He stressed that we should be concerned with what we need.

Hilliard Creecy asked about the project's timeline and next steps. Thomas said she will take these questions to the DOE and report back. She said the next step would be exploring the tool's value with or without DOE funding.

Burdick thought it worth exploring if the 20% energy savings threshold is flexible or set in stone.

Harris pointed to the RTF creating savings protocols, adapting SEEM to REEDR and EnergyPlus and wondered if this tool could be part of future work that would be needed anyway. He approved of accepting DOE funds to create a programmatic tool that the region needed anyway. Harris thought interactive measures and residential whole building approach would

require a simple tools like this, and asked if this is something we should do with RTF funding anyway.

Thomas thanked him, saying that is why she brought the topic to the RTF PAC. She added that the IRA is important but there is broader potential as energy savings change and get more complicated.

Gordon wondered if the IRA would survive the upcoming debt ceiling negotiations. He then wondered how ODOE will do in asking about non-modeling approaches, as the model is incidental to the accomplishments. Gordon thought that if a model was required a coordinated, regional approach would be interesting. He mused on several other interesting issues like if the required 20% savings needs to be in the model or on the ground, or baselines that don't fit the home, or simulation models showing things that can't happen in a real home.

Burdick stated that the next RTF PAC meeting would take place on September 15, 2023 from 9:00am-12:00pm. DePetris thanked the body for their thoughtful input. Burdick adjourned at 2:20pm.