



Colorado Electric Transmission Authority Toolkit for Community Engagement

January 3, 2023

Background

[Numerous studies](#) have shown that the U.S. electric transmission system must expand at an unprecedented rate in the coming decades. An aging grid, lack of investment in recent years, access to cost-effective resources, growth in demand due to electrification, resilience to extreme weather, and decarbonization goals all drive the need for this expansion. Yet, the pace of transmission construction has slowed markedly in recent years and renewable energy projects remain stuck in interconnection queues for want of transmission capacity. Concurrently, local opposition to large energy infrastructure projects has also grown.

Recognizing this dilemma, Colorado embarked on a novel undertaking in 2021, creating the Colorado Electric Transmission Authority (CETA) by state law.¹ An independent, political subdivision of the state, CETA is charged with enhancing electric transmission planning and development in Colorado.² Colloquially, CETA has been called a “transmission provider of last resort” and is unique in the West, found only in Colorado and New Mexico.

Since 2021, CETA has been working to establish its operations, including appointing a Board, writing bylaws, hiring an executive director, and developing policies for conducting its affairs. With these fundamentals now in place, CETA has turned its attention to transmission planning; CETA is in the process of commissioning a transmission expansion study with the goal of identifying new or enhanced transmission infrastructure needed in the state.³

While transmission planning is at CETA's core, also key to CETA's success will be meaningful and effective outreach to potential host communities. Numerous well-conceived energy infrastructure projects have been abandoned due to poor execution and local opposition. CETA will need to develop principles and materials to support thoughtful and inclusive community engagement in furtherance of transmission development in the state. Gridworks proposes to support CETA in this effort. Through facilitated stakeholder engagement, Gridworks proposes to assist CETA in developing a Toolkit for Community Engagement.

¹ Colorado [SB21-072](#).

² Sect. 40-42-104(1)(n), C.R.S.

³ See [CETA Request for Proposals: Electric Transmission Capacity Expansion Study for Colorado](#), issued Oct. 18, 2023.



Vision and Goal

- Our vision is to accelerate the decarbonization of Colorado's grid by facilitating CETA's development of a principled, inclusive approach to community engagement on transmission planning and siting.
- Our goal is to develop a CETA Toolkit for Community Engagement, to include case studies, Board principles, fact sheets, and community resources.
- Our objective is to convene the CETA executive director, Board members, practicing energy professionals, environmental justice organizations, and local community organizations to jointly develop the toolkit materials.

Scoping

In Scope

- Community engagement best practices
- Educational materials related to transmission planning and siting
- Outreach and communications with CETA, Board members, and stakeholders following CETA developments as directed by CETA Executive Director

Out of Scope

- Legal advice
- Direct community engagement
- Recommendations for transmission permitting and siting reform

Project Participants

Gridworks

- Cathy Boies, Director
- Matthew Tisdale, Executive Director
- Steve Black, Advisor

CETA

- Maury Galbraith, Executive Director
- CETA Board members - TBD

Toolkit Deliverables

- Literature review of community engagement best practices
- CETA Board principles for community engagement
- Fact sheets and educational materials describing transmission planning and siting processes
- Community resources including a model community benefits agreement and mediation options



Roles and Responsibilities

- Gridworks as the facilitator, project manager, and advisor:
 - Initiate project steps and manage project through to completion
 - Communicate and coordinate with CETA Executive Director
 - Outreach to CETA board members and stakeholders, as directed by CETA Executive Director
 - Organize and lead Community Engagement Toolkit meetings, including scheduling, agendas, note-taking, follow up, etc.
 - Host documents and maintain an organized platform for document sharing on Google Drive
 - Research and produce literature review, Board principles, educational materials, and community resources. Provide to CETA Executive Director and others as appropriate for review and comment. Finalize into public documents
 - Serve as a resource to the CETA Executive Director in an advisory role and provide on-going technical assistance
- CETA Executive Director as the decision-maker:
 - Review and timely respond to Gridworks' proposed project steps and draft materials
 - Identify CETA board members and stakeholders to participate in the Community Engagement Toolkit work
 - Provide guidance and technical expertise to lead the project to completion

Timeline

This project is anticipated to run Feb. 1, 2024 - Dec. 20, 2024. We envision a two-prong approach to complete the work: the first to engage the CETA Board to develop principles for community engagement informed by a literature review and the second to develop educational and community resource materials with stakeholder input.

Work Plan

Gridworks proposes the following objectives and milestones to complete this project.

Objective 1: Research and document industry best practices to community engagement from literature and recent efforts on community benefit agreements

Milestone: literature review document as the research foundation to later work (Feb-Apr 2024)

Objective 2: Develop a written statement of CETA Board principles for community engagement

Milestone: three in-person meetings with the CETA Board or designees to educate and develop principles (Apr-Jun 2024)



Objective 3: Develop CETA toolkit materials with stakeholder input, to include fact sheets, model community benefits agreement, mediation options, and educational materials.
Milestone: four meetings with stakeholders to produce materials, build relationships, and seek consensus approval (Jun-Oct 2024)

Objective 4: Provide on-going technical assistance and stakeholder engagement support to CETA's Executive Director (Feb-Dec 2024)