A large offshore wind turbine is being assembled. A tall, dark blue lattice boom crane is positioned on a yellow and white platform. The crane's arm is extended, holding a white wind turbine tower section. The background shows the ocean and a clear blue sky.

NOVEMBER 2025

Strengthening Offshore Wind Community Engagement

Recommendations for State Agencies

CleanEnergy
States Alliance



**Equinival
Partners**

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was produced by the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) and Equinaval Partners as part of CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Project. Over the past year, CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group—made up of three state agencies and six community-based organizations—developed a set of four recommendations to help states design and carry out proactive, robust, and meaningful community engagement related to offshore wind planning and development. These recommendations, if implemented, provide a pathway for substantial community participation in offshore wind planning and development processes. This report outlines those recommendations, summarizes key considerations, and provides links to other resources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Recommendations for State Agencies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Offshore wind power offers an enormous opportunity to build renewable, reliable, and domestic electricity generation off the coasts of the United States. If developed responsibly and at scale, offshore wind can help the country transition to a cleaner electricity grid, while also creating and supporting domestic manufacturing, trades, and management jobs; providing new opportunities to invest in local workforces and economies;¹ and offering the possibility for communities previously left behind by industrial and technological advances to materially benefit from a new industry and a cleaner power system.

The federal government's recent attacks on individual offshore wind projects, moratoria on offshore wind leasing and permitting, and changes to clean energy tax credits by Congress have hindered or stopped progress on offshore wind development for the time being. However, state governments continue to lead the charge in planning for and building offshore wind power.

Between 2022 and 2025, the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) convened state government energy agencies, community-based organizations, and environmental justice leaders to develop a strategy for how state governments' efforts to build offshore wind power can contribute to the long-term health, well-being, and economic vitality of local communities, particularly frontline and fenceline communities.² Throughout this process, state agencies and community-based organizations have emphasized that proactive, robust, and meaningful engagement between state agencies and communities adjacent to and impacted by offshore wind development is essential to ensure that offshore wind development is equitable and materially benefits these communities.

Over the last year, CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group—made up of three state agencies and six community-based organizations—developed a set of four

Over the last year, CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group developed a set of four recommendations to help states design and carry out proactive, robust, and meaningful community engagement related to offshore wind planning and development.

1 Shields, Matt, et al. 2022. "The Demand for a Domestic Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain." Golden, CO: National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL/TP-5000-81602. <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy22osti/81602.pdf>.

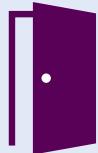
2 Frontline communities are communities that experience disproportionately higher impacts from climate change, such as extreme heat, wildfires, and flooding. Fenceline communities are communities that host or live adjacent to highly polluting industries, such as fossil-fuel extraction, energy production, or petrochemical manufacturing. Both frontline and fenceline communities are disproportionately people of color. See the Climate Reality Project's website to learn more: <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/frontline-fenceline-communities>.

recommendations to help states design and carry out proactive, robust, and meaningful community engagement related to offshore wind planning and development. These recommendations, if implemented, provide a pathway for substantial community participation in offshore wind planning and development processes.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



Share Information: Work with trusted partners to provide accurate information to impacted and adjacent communities about state and federal planning, permitting, and decision-making processes for offshore wind development.



Increase Access: Create or provide access to forums where impacted and adjacent communities can share input and influence decisions that affect them during the project planning, development, operation, and decommissioning processes.



Build and Sustain Community Capacity: Secure funding and resources for impacted and adjacent communities and community organizations to meaningfully participate in offshore wind planning, permitting, and decision-making processes at the local, state, and federal level.



Develop Frameworks and Standards for Investment in Communities: Work with impacted and adjacent communities to develop models, standards, and frameworks to realize long-term investments in communities from offshore wind developers and suppliers.

This document and its recommendations provide information that help advance state goals for creating an equitable and just offshore wind industry and ecosystem in the United States, but this is only a first step. Over the next 12 months, CESA and the Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group will collaborate with state agencies, community-based organizations, industry groups, and other stakeholders to begin implementing these recommendations.



INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Offshore wind power is a critical technology for decarbonizing the power grid in many coastal areas of the United States (US). Although it is a nascent industry in the US, with only 173 megawatts (MW) deployed so far, an additional 5,831 MW of capacity is scheduled for completion by the end of 2027³—enough to power over 2.5 million homes.⁴

Over the last decade, state agencies, environmental advocates, and coastal frontline and fenceline communities have driven the demand for offshore wind power as a key source of carbon-free power. State governments collectively aspire to develop over 115,000 MW of offshore wind power by 2050.⁵

Wide-scale deployment of offshore wind would increase the supply of renewable electricity and could decrease greenhouse gas emissions over time if it replaces fossil-fueled power generation.⁶ If paired with other low- and zero-emissions infrastructure such as electrified ports, offshore wind power could also lead to improved local air quality by replacing gas-fired power plants and provide an alternative power supply for pollution-emitting heavy industry.⁷ Beyond climate and health benefits, a robust domestic offshore wind industry and supply chain could also create significant economic benefits, including tens of thousands of jobs.⁸ In fact, the current wave of offshore wind projects under construction has already led to billions of dollars of investment in domestic manufacturing.⁹

Despite these potential benefits, the federal government has fundamentally changed its stance towards offshore wind development since January 2025, including issuing moratoria

Beyond climate and health benefits, a robust domestic offshore wind industry and supply chain could create significant economic benefits, including tens of thousands of jobs.

- 3 “Interactive Map.” Offshore Wind Power Hub. Clean Energy States Alliance. <https://offshorewindpowerhub.org/interactive-map>. Accessed July 27, 2025.
- 4 This is a total of the five projects’ published estimates.
- 5 McCoy, Angel, et al. 2024. “Offshore Wind Market Report: 2024 Edition.” Golden, CO: National Renewable Energy Laboratory. <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy24osti/90525.pdf>.
- 6 Shawhan, Daniel, et al. 2025. “Offshore Wind Power Examined: Effects, Benefits, and Costs of Offshore Wind Farms Along the US Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.” Resources for the Future. https://media.rff.org/documents/WP_24-17_2.25_Update.pdf.
- 7 Minghao Qiu, et al. “Impacts of wind power on air quality, premature mortality, and exposure disparities in the United States.” Science Advances 8, eabn8762(2022). <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abn8762>.
- 8 Shields, Matt, et al. Ibid.
- 9 “Interactive Map: Economic Benefits of Offshore Wind.” American Clean Power. <https://cleanpower.org/resources/interactive-map-the-economic-benefits-of-offshore-wind/>. Accessed 15 July 2025.

on offshore wind leasing and permitting¹⁰ and sunsetting clean energy tax credits¹¹ that help finance offshore wind projects. These actions make it unlikely that significant offshore wind development, beyond the projects already under construction, will take place over the next few years. Nonetheless, offshore wind remains an attractive source of carbon-free power, and many states remain committed to further deploying the technology to satisfy future energy demand and meet their climate goals.

The current pause on new—and in some cases existing—offshore wind project development presents a significant challenge to decarbonizing coastal power systems, but it also creates an opportunity to ensure that future offshore wind development does not replicate historic patterns of environmental injustice. Fossil-fueled energy production in the US has disproportionately burdened low-income communities and communities of color, which often host a higher proportion of fossil-fuel infrastructure that causes air pollution and poor health outcomes.¹² At the same time, people living in these communities are more likely to face the brunt of a changing climate, including living in areas prone to flooding or wildfire smoke, or living with inadequate infrastructure for extreme heat.¹³ Compounding these issues, communities that typically host fossil-fueled energy resources often lack the built, natural, and economic infrastructure needed to create a high quality of well-being for their residents.¹⁴

Fossil-fueled energy production in the US has disproportionately burdened low-income communities and communities of color, which often host a higher proportion of fossil-fuel infrastructure that causes air pollution and poor health outcomes

Offshore wind can help communities transition to a cleaner form of electricity production and provide opportunities to build local wealth by generating demand for local businesses, employing local residents, and revitalizing working waterfronts, but this is not a guarantee. Historically, inequitable energy and infrastructure development has shut certain communities out from the benefits of industrial transformations. As a result, low-income communities, communities of color, and coastal communities are eager to be more involved in the design of the emerging energy system, especially offshore wind production. To become

10 Executive Office of the President. "Temporary Withdrawal of All Areas on the Outer Continental Shelf From Offshore Wind Leasing and Review of the Federal Government's Leasing and Permitting Practices for Wind Projects." Federal Register 90, no. 18. 29 January 2025. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-01966/temporary-withdrawal-of-all-areas-on-the-outer-continental-shelf-from-offshore-wind-leasing-and>.

11 "H.R.1 - 119th Congress (2025-2026): One Big Beautiful Bill Act." Congress.gov. 4 July 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1/summary/55>. Accessed 10 July 2025.

12 "Peaker Power Plant Mapping Tool." Clean Energy Group. <https://www.cleaneigroup.org/initiatives/phase-out-peakers/maps>. Accessed 30 July 2025.

13 Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impacts. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-09/climate-vulnerability_september-2021_508.pdf.

14 Moon, Jennifer and Zully Juarez. "The Perfect Storm of Extraction, Poverty, and Climate Change: A Framework for Assessing Vulnerability, Resilience, Adaptation, and Just Transition in Frontline Communities." Just Solutions Collective. <https://justsolutionscollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/The-Perfect-Storm-of-Extraction-Poverty-and-Climate-Change-A-Just-Solutions-Report-Revised.pdf>.

true partners in shaping the emerging offshore wind industry, and to hold decision makers accountable for the implementation of critical policies, communities require greater access to offshore wind development and decision-making processes.

Without an intentional commitment to proactive, robust, and meaningful engagement between state agencies and local communities, offshore wind project development and power production could perpetuate historic patterns of environmental injustice. The current pause on offshore wind development, though a blow to states' ambitions to tackle climate change, offers an opportunity for state agencies to build stronger relationships with potentially impacted and adjacent communities and create the conditions for offshore wind to provide durable, tangible benefits in the long term. This document was developed to guide state agencies through this process.

CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Project

Since 2022, the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) has convened state government energy agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), and environmental justice (EJ) leaders to develop a strategy for how state offshore wind initiatives can contribute to the long-term health, well-being, and economic vitality of communities impacted by and adjacent to offshore wind infrastructure, especially fenceline and frontline communities. Throughout this process, state agencies and CBOs have emphasized that proactive, robust, and meaningful engagement between state agencies and communities is essential to ensure that offshore wind development is both equitable and materially beneficial to those impacted.

In 2021, CESA-member states working on offshore wind asked the organization for assistance in incorporating principles of equity and justice into their offshore wind planning, policies, and programs. CESA contracted with Equinival Partners, a consulting firm specializing in community engagement and stakeholder collaboration, to conduct outreach to CBOs already working on offshore wind or environmental justice issues and to facilitate meetings as part of CESA's new Offshore Wind and Equity Project. CESA and Equinival Partners agreed that this project was an opportunity to do more than just provide advice to state energy agencies; it was a chance for state agencies and the communities they serve to work together as partners to identify barriers to and solutions for equitable offshore wind development practices.

CESA and Equinival Partners began the project by conducting outreach to state agencies in order to understand existing efforts to promote just and equitable practices in offshore wind development. They also worked with the Climate Justice Alliance—a member alliance of 95 urban and rural frontline communities, organizations, and supporting networks in the climate justice movement—to develop criteria for identifying CBOs to join the effort (see Appendix A). These criteria were designed to ensure that participating CBOs were aligned with the values, principles, and strategies that advance a just energy transition, including a) being grounded in the community they represent, b) being located in a coastal state

The current pause on offshore wind development offers an opportunity for state agencies to build stronger relationships with potentially impacted and adjacent communities and create the conditions for offshore wind to provide durable, tangible benefits in the long term.

with potential for offshore wind development, and c) having expertise in or lived experience with EJ issues.

In the latter half of 2022, CESA and Equinival Partners convened a group of CBOs that met the above criteria to understand their priorities for ensuring equitable offshore wind development. This effort, called the Scoping Dialogue, culminated in an Offshore Wind and Equity Roundtable meeting involving 15 agencies from nine states and representatives from six CBOs at the end of 2022, where participants identified several topical areas that, if addressed appropriately, could make the offshore wind planning and development process more just and equitable (see Appendix B).

Over the course of the next year, state agencies and CBOs repeatedly cited one topic, rethinking community engagement, as an essential first step toward equitable offshore wind development. In response, CESA and Equinival Partners convened a planning and advisory committee to organize a nationwide meeting of state agencies, CBOs, and EJ leaders to further discuss how state agencies could improve community engagement efforts and include community participation in offshore wind planning and development. The committee, made up of six agencies from five states and representatives from seven CBOs, organized and hosted a virtual Offshore Wind and Equity National Workshop in late August 2024 around the theme of “Rethinking Community Engagement in Offshore Wind Planning and Development.” Over three days, more than 40 people, including officials from nine state energy agencies and representatives from 14 CBOs and EJ organizations, met to discuss ongoing efforts to improve community engagement and identify areas for improvement.

At the end of the National Workshop, state agency and CBO participants identified six areas where states could improve community engagement for offshore wind (see Appendix C). After the National Workshop, CESA organized an Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group made up of three state agencies and seven CBOs interested in refining the priority areas into a concrete set of recommendations that state agencies could implement. The Working Group’s secondary purpose was to encourage constructive dialogue, build trust, and work across differences between state agencies and the CBOs they serve.

The recommendations below were developed over the course of six formal meetings of the Offshore Wind and Equity Working group and dozens of one-on-one conversations during eight months of diligent work. They reflect an extraordinary effort to engage in honest and sometimes difficult conversations, ask tough questions, and commit to consensus-driven dialogue.

Methodology

CESA’s Offshore Wind and Equity Project has taken a truly innovative and novel approach to advancing principles of equity and justice in state energy policy and programming. Throughout the entire project, state agency staff and CBO representatives have engaged

Over three days, more than 40 people, including officials from nine state energy agencies and representatives from 14 CBOs and EJ organizations, met to discuss ongoing efforts to improve community engagement and identify areas for improvement.

with one another as equal partners with a common purpose and a shared set of values. In order to make this approach successful, CESA financially compensated CBOs for their time and efforts in project meetings, one-on-one conversations, and independent work on the project, through generous support from the Barr Foundation and other funders.

The purpose of this collaborative approach is twofold. First, CESA and Equival Partners wanted to model a type of collaboration that states could implement with their own constituents and communities. CESA and Equival Partners believe that this approach is an effective way for state agencies and local communities to build trust, learn from one another, and create effective policy and programming. Second, taking this approach ensured that the resulting recommendations would be practicable for state agencies to implement, since state agencies must work within the powers they are delegated by their legislatures.

Scope and Audience

The recommendations in this report are meant to address how state agencies responsible for carrying out laws and implementing programs can create opportunities for local communities to participate meaningfully in the offshore wind planning and development process and benefit from offshore wind power. Each recommendation is meant to build on the previous one to create a pathway towards just and equitable community engagement between state agencies and local communities.

The recommendations represent the collective input of contributors from 11 state agencies and over 20 CBOs and EJ organizations. For each of the four recommendations, CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group identified key issues to consider during implementation. The group also identified the most relevant and useful resources for program planners to consult.

During CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity project, the participating organizations identified many issues with the offshore wind development process as it currently exists; this document does not attempt to address all of them. As a guiding principle, the Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group tried to identify policy and programmatic changes that are possible for state agencies to implement without changes in law or statute.

The Working Group acknowledges, however, that depending on the state, some aspects of the recommendations in this report may require new laws or amendments to existing laws to be fully realized. In those cases, the Working Group invites readers to consider what those changes might be and what steps they might take to raise them with their local elected representatives.

The recommendations in this report are meant to address how state agencies responsible for carrying out laws can create opportunities for local communities to participate meaningfully in the offshore wind planning and development process and benefit from offshore wind power.

Offshore Wind and Community Impacts

The recommendations within this report place a special emphasis on building meaningful engagement with impacted and adjacent communities, which refers to people who reside

in neighborhoods, towns, and cities that host, are near to, and/or are affected by offshore wind development or infrastructure. Offshore wind projects have a large footprint that includes onshore infrastructure such as ports, manufacturing facilities, and electrical substations, so communities in proximity to those sites are considered adjacent.

Impacts from offshore wind can be positive, negative, or ambiguous. An example of a positive impact might be increased employment opportunities or economic activity near an offshore wind port or construction site; an example of a negative impact might be increases in air pollution from offshore wind construction activities; an ambiguous impact might be the sight of offshore wind turbines in the distance.

Many impacted and adjacent communities lack or face diminished access to decision-making because of income, historic and institutional racism, language barriers, or Tribal status. Communities impacted by and adjacent to offshore wind development are also often situated near existing and highly polluting energy infrastructure such as power plants. They are also more likely to face a disproportionate burden from climate change, such as flooding, wildfire smoke, and extreme heat. Many communities face several challenges at once. For these reasons, it is essential that state efforts to advance offshore wind development are informed by the needs and concerns of those communities who will be most impacted.

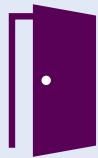
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group's four recommendations are outlined below. The discussion of each recommendation includes an explanation, the purpose for its inclusion, key considerations for state agencies and CBOs as they implement the recommendation, and a list of examples that demonstrate where aspects of the recommendation may have been tried or implemented. These examples are not necessarily endorsements; rather, they serve as a starting point for state agencies and CBOs to think about how they can adapt each recommendation to their own states and communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



Share Information: Work with trusted partners to provide accurate information to impacted and adjacent communities about state and federal planning, permitting, and decision-making processes for offshore wind development.



Increase Access: Create or provide access to forums where impacted and adjacent communities can share input and influence decisions that affect them during the project planning, development, operation, and decommissioning processes.



Build and Sustain Community Capacity: Secure funding and resources for impacted and adjacent communities and community organizations to meaningfully participate in offshore wind planning, permitting, and decision-making processes at the local, state, and federal level.



Develop Frameworks and Standards for Investment in Communities: Work with impacted and adjacent communities to develop models, standards, and frameworks to realize long-term investments in communities from offshore wind developers and suppliers.

Taken together, these recommendations create a pathway for state agencies to build strong relationships with communities impacted by or adjacent to offshore wind infrastructure in order to work together towards developing offshore wind power equitably. While there are four recommendations, they are not intended to be implemented in isolation.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Share Information



Work with trusted partners to provide accurate information to impacted and adjacent communities about state and federal planning, permitting, and decision-making processes for offshore wind development.

States should create state-specific resources that clearly, accurately, and transparently describe the basics of offshore wind power development and the respective state processes for offshore wind planning, procurement, siting, and permitting. These resources should explain how community groups and the general public can participate in those processes. States should also include how their processes interact and intersect with federal planning and permitting processes and delineate which government agencies are responsible for different decisions in the offshore wind development process.

The Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group recommends that state agencies partner with trusted messengers, such as local community organizations, nonprofits, and educational institutions, to provide unbiased information, clear timelines, and specific opportunities for public input so that local community members know how and when to engage in the planning and development process.

As much as possible, these resources should seek to explain complex technical, legal, and permitting concepts and processes in plain language. These resources should also be translated to provide appropriate access for all community members.

Purpose

The purpose of this recommendation is to give communities as much time as possible to determine how and when they need to participate in the offshore wind public engagement process. One concern frequently raised by the CBOs participating in CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group is that historically marginalized communities often hear about large energy and infrastructure projects too late in their planning, permitting, or development processes to provide meaningful input that might mitigate a project's harms or improve a project's benefits.

Having appropriate, accurate, and timely information is the first step for local communities and community members to meaningfully engage in the offshore wind planning and development process.

Key Considerations

Offshore wind projects go through several years of planning, permitting, and study—overseen by many different levels of government and various government agencies—before they are completed. State agencies should consider how they can help community members to better understand federal, state, and local



RECOMMENDATION 1 Share Information

processes and milestones so that they can participate in public engagement and feedback opportunities during project planning and development. States should also consider partnering with a wide variety of trusted community leaders/messengers to develop tailored communications and outreach strategies and share information about offshore wind.

When implementing this recommendation, states should consider the following best practices and approaches:

- Spend time with CBOs to identify and build relationships with trusted messengers.
- Partner with local organizations and trusted messengers that can help create and disseminate informational materials to their communities, such as local community organizations, nonprofits, and educational institutions.
- Help local organizations understand the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) Area Identification and Permitting processes.
- Seek avenues to proactively involve local community organizations in BOEM's Area Identification and Permitting Processes.

A good resource for how to conduct community engagement is NYSERDA's [Guiding Principles for Offshore Wind Stakeholder Engagement](#). UPROSE produced an excellent Environmental Justice training presentation for offshore wind developers.

Examples

There are several sources of general information about the offshore wind planning process. These include the following:

- The National Renewable Energy Laboratory's (NREL) [Offshore Wind Guide](#). This document provides a broad and accessible overview of offshore wind power and the role of federal, state, and local governments in offshore wind planning and development.
- The American Clean Power Association's [Introduction to Public Participation in U.S. Offshore Wind Development](#)
- BOEM's [A Citizen's Guide to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's Renewable Energy Authorization Process](#).
- The Clean Energy States Alliance, in partnership with the National Wildlife Federation, manages the [Offshore Wind Power Hub](#), a website that tracks every offshore wind project, lease area, and major state policy in the United States.

There are also several state-specific informational resources:

- The Maryland Energy Administration's (MEA) [offshore wind webinar series](#) explains Maryland's offshore wind planning and permitting procedures, as well as how local businesses can take advantage of MEA's offshore wind grants.

States should consider partnering with a wide variety of trusted community leaders/messengers to develop tailored communications and outreach strategies and share information about offshore wind.

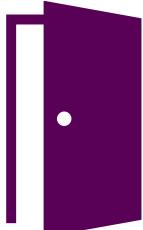


RECOMMENDATION 1
Share Information

- NYSERDA's ongoing [Learning from the Experts webinar series](#) covers a very wide range of offshore wind-related topics in considerable depth.
- NYSERDA and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority have partnered to create [OffshoreWindTraining.org](#), a website that provides detailed and accessible information about careers in offshore wind and training and education opportunities in the Northeast.
- The Maine Department of Energy Resources [Gulf of Maine Floating Research Array webpage](#) explains how the state identified an area for its research array, including links to public webinars, work session recordings, and relevant documents.
- Redwood CORE Hub created a [California Offshore Wind Development Timeline](#), which illustrates the interplay between BOEM's federal processes and California's state processes.
- The California Energy Commission developed the [Assembly Bill 525 Offshore Wind Energy Strategic Plan](#), which lays out the steps the state plans to take to develop offshore wind energy in federal waters off the coast.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Increase Access



Create or provide access to forums where impacted and adjacent communities can share input and influence decisions that affect them during project planning, development, operation, and decommissioning processes.

States should work with adjacent and impacted communities and community organizations to create local multi-stakeholder forums where community members and community organizations can meet regularly with representatives from state and local government agencies, as well as other key stakeholders such as fishing, industry, academia and organized labor. These forums would be a place for adjacent and impacted communities to consistently receive critical information and provide input on project planning, development, and decommissioning throughout an offshore wind project's lifecycle.

Questions that these forums might consider include the following:

- What are the needs and priorities of communities impacted by or adjacent to offshore wind infrastructure?
- What are the related infrastructure needs in communities adjacent to and impacted by offshore wind development?
- What questions and concerns do community members have about offshore wind, and how can they be addressed?
- How could investment from offshore wind development augment efforts already underway in these communities?
- What role can local communities and CBOs play in the transition to, operation of, and potential decommissioning of offshore wind projects and related infrastructure?

Purpose

The purpose of this recommendation is to give local communities, especially EJ communities, an opportunity to learn about and influence the decisions on offshore wind development that will affect their well-being. EJ communities, low-income communities, and communities of color have historically been left out of key investment and infrastructure decisions that affect them, leading to poorer economic and health outcomes, as well as distrust of state and local governments. Once community members have an understanding of offshore wind development timelines, key milestones, and opportunities to engage, it is vital that states bring together local communities and key stakeholders to understand how existing or potential projects in the state can best serve adjacent and impacted communities.

EJ communities, low-income communities, and communities of color have historically been left out of key investment and infrastructure decisions that affect them.



RECOMMENDATION 2 Increase Access

Key Considerations

Implementation of this recommendation may take different forms depending on existing state laws, the makeup and history of local communities adjacent to or impacted by offshore wind development, and the needs and priorities of other important stakeholders in the project.

Although several states have existing multi-stakeholder forums to provide guidance for offshore wind development, these forums do not always include representatives from adjacent, impacted, or EJ communities. This lack of representation prevents these bodies from providing inclusive guidance, perspectives, or input on project development.

States should consider the following questions when designing a multi-stakeholder forum:

- How do forum organizers determine which communities are adjacent to or impacted by local offshore wind development, and who makes this determination?
- How can forum organizations compensate participants for their time and effort?
- How do forum organizers determine which aspects of project design and delivery should local communities or multi-stakeholder forums have influence over?
- Are multi-stakeholder forums consistent with state sunshine/open meetings laws?
- Who facilitates meetings?
- Who will draft and share meeting summaries and determine next steps?
- What factors should forum organizers consider to make meetings accessible (meeting times, locations, language access, closed captioning, transportation, childcare, etc.)?
- Should meetings be online and/or in-person?

Examples

Several states have limited multi-stakeholder forums or committees for specific stakeholders to advise on specific issues, such as science and scientific research and environmental protections. A few examples are provided below:

- The Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) hosts [Habitat and Fisheries Working Groups](#).
- The Maine Department of Energy Resources runs the [Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium](#). The Consortium is led by an advisory committee made up of representatives from fisheries, public and private academic institutions, offshore wind industry, coastal communities, environmental organizations, and state government. Their [research strategy is available here](#).

Although several states have existing multi-stakeholder forums to provide guidance for offshore wind development, these forums do not always include representatives from adjacent, impacted, or EJ communities.



RECOMMENDATION 2 Increase Access

- The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection convenes an Offshore Wind [Working Group](#).
- California Coastal Commission convenes the [7C California Offshore Wind and Fisheries Working Group](#).
- The [Pacific Offshore Wind Consortium \(POWC\)](#) is a joint effort between three research centers: the Schatz Energy Research Center at Cal Poly Humboldt, the Pacific Marine Energy Center at Oregon State University, and the Center for Coastal Marine Sciences at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

There are several other examples of more expansive multi-stakeholder forums that include EJ communities. These efforts are below:

- NYSERDA has created designated [Technical Working Groups](#) to address several different topics, including Fisheries, Environmental Protection, Maritime Safety, Jobs and Supply Chain, and they added a dedicated Environmental Justice Technical Working Group in 2024.
- As mandated by the state's legislature, the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development is currently leading the development of the [Oregon Offshore Wind Roadmap](#) through a robust participatory process that includes several topical working groups.
- As part of its [Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement](#) process in the New York Bight, BOEM, New York, and New Jersey convened the [Environmental Justice Roundtable Convening on Offshore Wind near New York and New Jersey](#). The effort included several meetings over multiple years to understand how to make the federal offshore wind planning process more accessible and equitable. The project's webpage and meeting notes have since been deleted, but the above slides remain online.
- The Redwood CORE Hub in Humboldt, California has brought together a diverse range of stakeholders to plan for offshore wind development in Northern California through their Tribal Climate Resilience and Offshore Wind Community Benefits Networks.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Build and Sustain Community Capacity



Secure funding and resources for impacted and adjacent communities and community organizations to meaningfully participate in offshore wind planning, permitting, and decision-making processes at the local, state, and federal level.

States should identify and secure funding and resources that enable community organizations and community members to engage and participate in offshore wind planning and development processes. This may include funding for community organizations or community members to participate in public meetings and hearings, working groups, meetings with developers and other stakeholders, and other participatory engagement activities or to provide other expertise. It may also include funding that helps community organizations pay for technical consultation or legal services. States should also consider securing funding for community-led engagement activities, such as educational events, job fairs, community planning, and more.

In particular, states should work to leverage private sector (for-profit or nonprofit) resources alongside public funding or include support from philanthropy when state funds are not available. States may also consider how offshore wind developers can support capacity-building efforts.

Purpose

The purpose of this recommendation is to ensure that community organizations and community members are able to participate in offshore wind engagement opportunities in a substantive and meaningful way. CBOs in CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group cited funding and staff capacity as major barriers to playing a more active role in offshore wind planning and development in their states. State agency staff cited budgetary uncertainty and onerous procedures as major barriers to helping local community organizations build capacity. Additionally, community organizations lack the legal and technical know-how of developers, which puts them at a disadvantage in multi-stakeholder meetings or community benefit agreement negotiations. This is why the Working Group encourages state agencies to look for creative solutions to capacity building and play an active role in helping community organizations find other sources of funding.

The Working Group encourages state agencies to look for creative solutions to capacity building and play an active role in helping community organizations find other sources of funding.



RECOMMENDATION 3

Build and Sustain Community Capacity

Key Considerations

One potential pathway to support engagement activities would be for states to create funding pools from existing community engagement budget allocations, then secure matching funds from developers seeking to operate in the state, and from local, regional and national funders interested in promoting offshore wind development and robust community engagement.

States that face strict rules or onerous procedures for disbursing funds to smaller community organizations might consider a subgranting arrangement with a larger community institution or environmental justice organization that can then disburse funds to local CBOs.

States should consider the following questions as they try to implement this recommendation:

- How is “community” or “community organization” defined?
- How is priority for funding/capacity determined?
- What is a fair solicitation process for ensuring that communities and community organizations can apply?
- What is a fair reporting process for ensuring that funds are spent productively?
- Are capacity-building opportunities accessible to communities and community organizations that speak languages other than English?

Some states provide compensation for community organizations and community members that participate in their advisory committees or working groups, for example:

- NYSERDA pays community organizations for their participation in its [EJ Technical Working Group](#).
- The Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority’s [Stakeholder Group Compensation Program](#) compensates residential utility customers in EJ communities for participation in dockets. Compensation covers legal fees, expert witnesses, and other associated costs.
- The California Assembly passed a bill ([AB 1417](#)) that would allow the state to allocate money from the existing Voluntary Offshore Wind and Coastal Resources Protection Program for capacity funding activities within local communities, local governments, Tribal governments, and Tribal communities. The existing fund allows for private donations, in addition to appropriations from federal grants. The bill has not been signed by the governor as of September 2025.

States that face strict rules or onerous procedures for disbursing funds to smaller community organizations might consider a subgranting arrangement with a larger community institution or environmental justice organization that can then disburse funds to local CBOs.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop Frameworks and Standards for Investment in Communities



Work with impacted and adjacent communities to develop models, standards, and frameworks to realize long-term investments in communities from offshore wind developers and suppliers.

State agencies should work in partnership with communities adjacent to or impacted by offshore wind development to identify new or existing frameworks and standards for investments in communities. These frameworks and standards would ensure that investments (from state and local governments, project developers, and major suppliers in the electricity grid, port infrastructure, manufacturing, workforce, and more) flow to the communities hosting major offshore wind infrastructure or impacted by offshore wind development, leading to durable and long-term benefits for these communities.

Frameworks to secure long-term investment in communities include community benefits agreements (CBAs), host-community agreements, or community benefit funds. Long-term investments or co-investments may include physical or social infrastructure like parks, schools, housing, flood prevention, or other community needs.

Frameworks targeting employment include project labor agreements, local hiring requirements, and investment in educational and vocational training institutions. Regardless of the legal structure, frameworks should prioritize long-term material benefits and prosperity for their communities.

These frameworks should be paired with robust standards that a) encourage meaningful consultation between project developers and communities, b) ensure accountability, c) include strong reporting requirements, and d) allow communities and community organizations to play a significant role in monitoring adherence to the framework over the lifetime of the project.

Robust frameworks and standards ensure that investments in historically marginalized communities truly address priorities or issues identified by those communities in a sustainable way. Current models tend to focus on community benefits, rather than investments. Benefits do not necessarily build wealth in communities or address long-term structural inequities. The Working Group proposes that states work together with communities to learn from and build upon these efforts, while also exploring new ways to develop investment priorities and ensure that developers follow through on their commitments.

State agencies should work in partnership with communities adjacent to or impacted by offshore wind development to identify new or existing frameworks and standards for investments in communities.



RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop Frameworks and Standards for Investment in Communities

Purpose

The purpose of this recommendation is to ensure that investment from state and local governments, project developers, and major suppliers in support of offshore wind generation and supply chain projects leads to durable and long-term benefits for adjacent and impacted communities, especially frontline, fenceline, and EJ communities. CBOs in the Working Group pointed out that community “benefits” resulting from large infrastructure projects are often token, transient, or do little to address the long-standing inequities these communities face. Furthermore, these “benefits” do not give impacted or adjacent communities a stake in the long-term success of the project. Focusing on long-term investments, rather than short-term benefits, reframes the discussion to emphasize how offshore wind projects can contribute to the long-term well-being of impacted and adjacent communities.

Focusing on long-term investments, rather than short-term benefits, reframes the discussion to emphasize how offshore wind projects can contribute to the long-term well-being of impacted and adjacent communities.

Key Considerations

Much like Recommendation No. 2, implementation of this recommendation will take different forms in different states, depending on existing legislation, procurement requirements, and the priorities and needs of local communities.

When implementing this recommendation, states should consider the following questions:

- What plans or proposals for community development have already been created by local organizations or coalitions?
- How can state agencies and local communities define short- and long-term benefits, and who gets to make that definition?
- How do we encourage investments that benefit communities in the long term? Should states support community participation in a prioritization process, such as participatory budgeting?
- How can state agencies, communities, and industry actors measure the level of community investment and associated benefits and assess whether they've been delivered?
- What mechanisms exist or need to be developed to hold all parties participating in community investment frameworks accountable?
- How can these frameworks and standards ensure that local community members have access to employment opportunities at all levels, not just entry-level positions?



RECOMMENDATION 4

Develop Frameworks and Standards for Investment in Communities

Examples

Multiple organizations have compiled examples of existing CBAs connected to offshore wind projects:

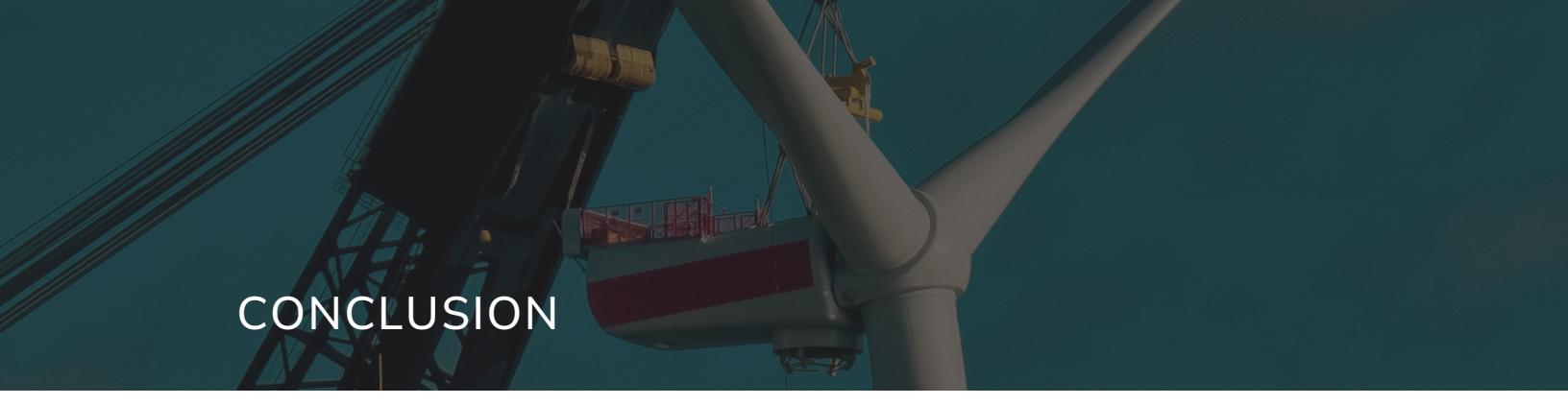
- [Columbia Sabin Center Community Benefits Agreements Database](#)
- [NREL WINDExchange Community Benefits Guide](#)

Additionally, Berkeley Law has written a policy paper exploring possibilities for offshore wind CBAs in California.

Two of the CBOs participating in CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group played key roles in the development of long-term investment plans for offshore wind in their communities.

- The Salem Alliance for the Environment advocated for and organized the negotiation of a [CBA between port operator Crowley and the City of Salem, Massachusetts](#) for the Salem Offshore Wind Terminal.
- UPROSE produced its [Green Resilient Industrial District \(GRID\) 2.0 Plan](#) for the development of clean and resilient infrastructure in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.
- UPROSE, in partnership with Rogue Climate, Taproot Earth, and the Climate Justice Alliance, also created "[Principles for a Just Transition in Offshore Wind Energy](#)," which adapts principles of energy democracy to offshore wind.

Redwood CORE Hub, a participant in CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity National Workshop, has also explored possible community benefits frameworks in Northern California, and successfully advocated for the inclusion of a bid credit for CBAs in BOEM's offshore wind lease auctions in California and Oregon. In its Final Sale Notices for offshore wind lease sales off the coast of California and its Proposed Sale Notices for [Oregon](#), BOEM included a 25 percent bid credit for developers who negotiated a CBA with a community impacted by the project's development.



CONCLUSION

The federal government's effort to halt offshore wind development has paused progress on offshore wind projects, at least temporarily. CESA's Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group believes that states should seize this opportunity to build strong relationships with local communities so that a more just and equitable model of offshore wind development will emerge in the future. Building these relationships takes considerable time, resources, and intention, and the above recommendations offer a pathway for state agencies to begin this process or build upon existing efforts.

In many ways, the Working Group worked backward to move forward, focusing on the goal of long-term and durable community investments from offshore wind power as a starting point. Communities cannot truly benefit from offshore wind development unless there are frameworks in place to ensure the delivery of those benefits and standards. These frameworks and standards, in turn, are not possible to plan or negotiate without the planning and hosting of forums for community organizations and community members to participate in and provide input into the process. Crucially, none of the above can happen unless communities have access to factual and accessible information about offshore wind and know how and when to engage in the planning and development process.

Finally, although these recommendations were built around offshore wind development, the principles behind them are applicable to other renewable energy technologies. Access to information, forums for community input and pathways for decision-making, strong and well-resourced community organizations, and frameworks for securing benefits and investments are a solid foundation for promoting a just transition to a cleaner grid.

Communities must have access to factual and accessible information about offshore wind and know how and when to engage in the planning and development process.

Next Steps

Over the next year, CESA will work with states to discuss how to implement these recommendations both individually and collectively. CESA will undertake the following actions to support states and communities:

- Continue to convene the Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group as a space for state agencies and CBOs to identify obstacles and find solutions to implementation of the above recommendations.
- Work with state agencies and CBOs to compile and produce research and resources to help impacted and adjacent communities participate in offshore wind planning and development processes.

- Work with individual state agencies to identify community partners and support the adaptation and creation of existing and new programs to support the implementation of the above recommendations.
- Conduct outreach to a wider array of offshore wind stakeholders, including developers and organized labor, to understand their role in the just and equitable development of offshore wind in the US.
- Work with states, CBOs, and other offshore wind stakeholders to make CESA's Offshore Wind Power Hub website a trusted resource for information about offshore wind power in the US.



APPENDIX A

Criteria for Offshore Wind and Equity National Workshop Participation

Developed in partnership with the Climate Justice Alliance

The criteria used to select the workshop participants and potential working group members are listed below. The criteria will ensure that these groups are grounded in values, principles, and strategies that advance a just transition.

Criterion 1: Community Grounding

Organizations should be “grounded in the community that they represent.” We take this to mean that these organizations are:

1. Located in and led by people from the communities they purport to represent; and
2. Have a history of leading or supporting meaningful action on environmental, climate, economic, or racial justice issues relevant to those communities.

Criterion 2: Geography

In addition, organizations should represent a range of geographies that are:

1. Located along the Atlantic Coast, the Pacific Coast, or in the Gulf of Mexico; and
2. Located in states that have a real prospect for offshore wind development in a near-term time horizon of under 10 years.

Criterion 3: Expertise and Lived Experience

Further, organizations should bring substantial expertise in environmental justice, climate justice, and systemic change, which can be evidenced by:

1. Understanding health impacts of extractive industries, including but not limited to: energy (mining, refining fossil fuels), transportation, agriculture, construction and development, waste; and/or
2. Defending environmental and public health interests of communities impacted directly by extractive industries; and/or
3. Working to shut down harmful industries and practices while also bridging community priorities and labor concerns, understanding that impacted workers are also part of frontline communities and must be part of the solutions; and/or
4. Organizing communities to engage in policy change and just transition projects that build healthier communities; and/or

5. Taking a systemic change approach to their work, meaning that they not only address environmental, climate, economic, and racial justice issues, but are also committed to building and transforming power structures within their communities and states.

It is helpful, but not required, that CBOs also bring experience/expertise with renewable energy?

1. Experience/expertise in renewable energy policy/development and offshore wind development in particular; or
2. Experience/expertise in broader environmental issues including power generation and transmission, public health concerns from power generation, equitable distribution of economic development opportunities and benefits from renewable energy development, and other relevant issues.

Ideally, both types of organizations described in this last paragraph would be part of this effort. That said, we acknowledge that some of the strongest grassroots organizations with track records on environmental justice, climate justice, economic justice, and racial justice may not yet be engaged in offshore wind projects in their respective states, but will have a strong interest in addressing the impacts and benefits of offshore wind.

APPENDIX B

Equitable Offshore Wind Development Scoping Dialogue Roundtable Meeting

Highlights and Potential Next Steps (February 2, 2023)

Purpose, Objectives, and General Process

On February 2, 2023, a group of over 30 participants comprised of officials from state agencies responsible for aspects of offshore wind development and leaders from community-based organizations met virtually to discuss issues, challenges, and opportunities for action towards more equitable offshore wind development. The objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- Hear from CBO/EJ leaders about their concerns and hopes for offshore wind development in their state and how more equitable offshore wind development could uplift their community.
- Discuss the greatest opportunities for change in the near term and over the long term.
- Identify a range of potential actions that state officials and CBO/EJ leaders agree warrant further discussion and collaborative work in the next year.

This meeting was part of a larger effort to identify those policies and programs that can be implemented to ensure that the promise of equitable offshore wind development reaches all communities in our society. From its inception, the effort has been designed to identify issues that are essential to ensuring just and equitable distribution of the opportunities, resources, and benefits of offshore wind development. This effort is particularly focused on supporting the voices of historically marginalized and underinvested communities to shape the solutions that will impact them on a day-to-day basis.

During this phase, CESA worked with both state officials and CBO/EJ leaders separately to identify the concerns and questions they had regarding equitable offshore wind development, as well as potential solutions. The groups supported the production of two separate reports:

- The states provided their viewpoints in the “State of the States” report developed by CESA.¹⁵ This report highlighted steps that state agencies are already taking to build equity and justice into their program design for offshore wind development, covering issues such as procurement, economic development and job training, and community engagement.
- The CBO/EJ leaders produced a summary report of their discussions on establishing a more just and equitable process for offshore wind development. The report focused on

¹⁵ Vero Bourg-Meyer & Sam Schacht. “Offshore Wind and Equity: State of the States Report.” Clean Energy States Alliance, November 2022. <https://www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/offshore-wind-and-equity>.

economic development and procurement, community engagement, community benefits, public health, and offshore wind infrastructure siting.

Meeting Insights

The groups came together during a February 2023 roundtable meeting to discuss their concerns and questions and build pathways for continued discussion on potential solutions. During the meeting, several key issues were raised, alongside opportunities for further discussion between state officials and CBO/EJ leaders. A summary of those issues follows.

Participation of People of Color and EJ Communities in the Offshore Wind Workforce

Leaders from CBOs and EJ groups mentioned that many workforce training programs prioritize training and hiring for entry-level offshore wind jobs. They encouraged state policymakers to consider prioritizing an inclusive workforce at every level of the offshore wind workforce, including mid-level, managerial, and executive positions. Additionally, they recommended developing a concrete and transparent set of metrics for measuring the progress of offshore wind hiring and workforce demographics.

Community Economic Development

Contracts produced from projects need to be available to local businesses and entrepreneurs, and these businesses need the tools and lead time to be able to access contracts with the same ease as established industry players. Not only do workers need to be trained for offshore wind, but businesses also need advice and support to grow their operations and pursue project contracts.

Project Labor and Community Benefits Agreements

CBO and EJ leaders mentioned the need to ensure that project labor agreements (PLAs) and community benefits agreements (CBAs) support community needs. Communities have complained that PLAs often do not serve those historically marginalized and underinvested communities, instead providing jobs to union workers from outside those communities. Engaging labor unions in future discussions was a strategy raised by both state officials and CBO and EJ leaders to develop model PLAs and CBAs that address communities' needs.

Permitting and Siting in EJ Communities

CBO and EJ leaders asked states to consider the impacts of siting renewable generation and storage projects in communities that have previously hosted fossil generation infrastructure. They argued that communities that have previously borne the burden of electricity generation should not continue to bear that burden just because new projects are renewable. Going forward, they suggest state and developer engagement include those communities who have historically hosted electricity generation, in addition to coastal communities.

Community Health and Peaker Power Plants

Some EJ leaders are particularly interested in utilizing offshore wind power to eliminate the need for peaker power plants. The closure of peaker plants is a central issue for some communities burdened by poor air quality, especially in periods of peak energy usage. Additionally, these communities are concerned with how to mitigate pollution from project construction, since this will likely happen in or near their communities.

Community Education and Outreach

A major concern for the CBO and EJ leaders is the need for communities to have better information, education, and outreach to make informed decisions about offshore wind. Communities want to be in partnership with their state officials on energy development and provision. To do so, they will need to have a solid understanding of the potential benefits and impacts of offshore wind to their residents.

Examples of Positive State & Community Co-Governance

State officials shared some of the work they are doing to partner with communities on offshore wind development. In south Brooklyn, state officials from NYSERDA have worked with UPROSE to improve the development process and ensure that the community shares in the benefits, opportunities and resources derived from offshore wind development. CBOs have been an integral part of the discussions on offshore wind decision making, establishing a system of “co-governance.” Another example of state-CBO co-governance was the Listen, Learn, Share model employed in Maryland.

Identifying and Reaching Affected Communities

Several state participants shared their difficulties in connecting with historically marginalized and underinvested communities. State officials spoke about the difficulties they have had in garnering interest among these communities for their programmatic efforts. While some states have begun efforts to share programming information with communities, there is still much work to be done. Wrap-around services will be necessary to eliminate as many barriers as possible to communities participating in workforce programs. Maryland’s Listen, Learn, Share program was identified as a potential model for community engagement.

Building Trust between Government and Communities

CBOs and EJ leaders stated that a major reason for the lack of engagement from communities can be traced back to a lack of trust between communities and government. State officials recognize this disconnect and are working to better understand the root causes of the distrust and potential solutions. CBO and EJ leaders offered a number of responses; ultimately, it will be critical for state agencies to work with these community leaders to design and implement strategies to build trust over time.

Opportunities Going Forward

In general, there was good initial discussion of the issues that must be addressed to promote just and equitable offshore wind development. During the meeting, state officials asked for more conversations on specific topics. CBO and EJ leaders, for their part, want to see these conversations result in real change, rather than marginal shifts in policy. From the roundtable discussion, we believe there are several areas that could benefit from additional engagement between the parties:

Development of Model PLAs and CBAs

Both states and communities, as well as industry, would benefit from collaboration that identified the elements of quality project labor and community benefits agreements. Labor leaders should be part of these discussions, as some unions have had strained relationships with communities of color in the past.

Rethinking Community Engagement

A common theme in the discussion was how communities can become partners with states, labor, and industry to establish shared decision-making models for siting and development opportunities; co-design and co-implement solutions from that decision making; and identify shared benefits across all parties, with a focus on communities. States and communities should work together to examine the current community engagement and public involvement systems, clarify the successes and limitations of those systems, and identify potential changes that could enable the partnership model between states and communities.

Measurement, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Evaluation of offshore wind development processes represents another area for potential collaboration between states and communities. As policies are put in place with the promise of more equitable offshore wind development processes, communities will want to see evidence that those policies are having their intended effect. Examples of where specific metrics would be helpful include public health and air quality, hiring across the offshore wind development ecosystem (from construction to the boardroom), participation in workforce development programs, and state and developer contracts for Tier 2 and Tier 3 suppliers. Collaborative work could produce agreement on data to be collected, targets to indicate equitable offshore wind development, and possible remedies when those targets are not achieved.

Roundtable Moderator

- Kevin Bryan—Equinival Partners

Organizations in Attendance—State Agencies

- California Energy Commission
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Connecticut Office of the Governor
- Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
- Maryland Department of Commerce
- Maryland Department of Labor
- Maryland Energy Administration
- Maryland Governor's Office of Small Business Affairs
- Maryland Office of Strategic Initiatives
- Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
- Massachusetts Governor's Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
- New Jersey Economic Development Authority
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)
- North Carolina Department of Commerce
- Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources

Organizations in Attendance—CBOs

- UPROSE—Brooklyn, New York
- ktcPlan—Fairfax, Virginia
- Energy Consultant—DC, MD, VA Metro Area
- CAUSE—Oxnard, California
- Ironbound Community Corporation—Newark, New Jersey
- Community Housing Empowerment Connection Inc.—New Castle, Delaware

Attendees—Other

- Vero Bourg-Meyer—Clean Energy States Alliance
- Warren Leon—Clean Energy States Alliance
- Sam Schacht—Clean Energy States Alliance

Equitable Offshore Wind Development

A Guide to State Policy and Action

The sections below represent our attempt to sort the themes and ideas that we heard during the February 2023 Workshop into separate areas for action by state agencies. The following framework is meant to guide the Offshore Wind and Equity Working Group as participants determine what recommendations they would like to make to state agencies.

Within each action area, we have included notes from our discussions during the Workshop. These notes are generally rougher, since they reflect where we left off at the end of the Workshop. The notes will help inform the Working Group's recommendations as the project moves forward.

Identify Principles for Community Engagement

These principles are meant to guide state agencies across the entire engagement and planning process. State agencies should keep these principles in mind as they attempt to build or amend engagement programs and processes that work for their communities.

Basic principles for equitable offshore wind development:

- Adopt a message that this new industry represents an opportunity to share benefits, opportunities, and resources across communities that has not been taken with other economic shifts.
- Promote a goal of engaging communities as partners in the decision-making process alongside government and developers.
- Center and prioritize the needs of historically marginalized communities, including Black and Brown communities, Indigenous communities, and environmental justice communities.

Promote Community Engagement at the State and Local Level

Create engagement structures that can be replicated or adapted to increase community/CBO involvement in decision making

- Communities of Practice (COPs) help bring in a lot of stakeholders to build best practices. Want to expand the COP. Have developers there to help inform discussions.
- Establish best practice/requirement that development in certain communities (EJ communities? Other definitions?) requires COP/community engagement structures to ensure involvement in setting agendas.

- Outline the key elements required to support a strong community of practice or community engagement structure.
- Include a process to track the COP engagement process, including meeting outcomes, key questions; show progress of discussions over time.
- Include a “checklist” in the RFP for how such community engagement structures should be organized and convened.
- Create a best practices list for industry on the reasons for strong community engagement.

Identify specific issue areas that need to be addressed to support equitable offshore wind development

- Port emissions and electrification
- Public health impacts from development activities
- What else?

Negotiate Strong Benefits Agreements/Investments

Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) and other community investments are a primary pathway for ensuring that offshore wind projects strengthen the communities that host them. Without an inclusive process, proper guidelines for engagement, and proper enforcement mechanisms, these “benefits” may not actually strengthen communities in meaningful ways or may actively harm communities. Workshop participants offered several ideas for how state agencies can ensure that benefits and investment agreements between developers and communities actually strengthen communities.

Establish principles for crafting and negotiating CBAs/community investment agreements

- States as broker between CBOs and developers
- Consider generational nature of projects – make sure community is a foundational partner throughout the life of the project
- Enforcement element needs to be included
- Support capacity of communities to define their needs
- Establish state policy that certain types of projects (not just offshore wind) are REQUIRED to have a community benefits agreement in place
- Conversely, CBAs may not be required, but policy can make successful proposals very difficult without having a CBA; and then make the CBAs that are agreed to binding.
- Establish best practice/requirement to have developer(s) fund a community benefit agreement coordinator? It could be required theoretically.

NOTE: Be clear about the definition of “benefits.” What are benefits, and what are baseline priorities for projects?

Promote Information and Knowledge Sharing between States and Communities

Workshop participants identified that historically marginalized communities face significant and persistent knowledge gaps that make it difficult to engage in the offshore wind planning and development process. Communities are reliant on governments and developers to provide information about offshore wind development, which is not always provided in a timely manner or in a way that's easy to understand.

Identify key information that communities need to participate in decision making

- Community-based knowledge (Indigenous, local, traditional, etc.) should be a fundamental part of decision-making processes.
 - How do we organize/manage this information?
 - What resources do we need to manage this information?
 - How do we make this information accessible to users with diverse knowledge needs?
- Specific knowledge types include:
 - Project timelines
 - Process for approvals, permitting, construction, operations and maintenance, etc.
 - Mapping—demographics, locations of key community assets, who's involved
 - Information on general offshore wind development – phases, how it happens, opportunities, potential impacts (environmental, health), costs/benefits
 - Cumulative impact assessment data
 - Other data and information that should be collected?

Identify where this information and knowledge should be stored and how it can be accessed

- Should consider a centralized information hub; could be managed by state agency or a community-based organization
- CESA's Offshore Wind Power Hub website could be a starting point

Build Community Capacity

Participation in offshore wind planning and development on behalf of historically marginalized communities is often led by community-based organizations, which may be responsible for several community issues and may lack the budget, staffing, and institutional knowledge to participate meaningfully in the process. Communities and community-based organizations need the proper resources to participate fully in the decision-making process.

Establish pathways for increasing community capacity

- Need policies that support the development of community-based organizations to participate effectively in decision-making processes
- State and local government capacity
 - Staffing, funding, and technology
 - Leverage CBOs as liaisons, voices in the community (need resources to support CBOs in this role)
 - Expanded flexibility to engage with communities and share information
 - Greater cross-agency coordination
- Collaboration—identifying structures to house and support collaborative efforts
 - Agreement on the need (terms of reference)
 - Interagency group with CBO participation, leadership
 - Cannot be extractive

Encourage Cross—Agency Coordination

Responsibility for offshore wind planning and development is often spread across several state agencies, and these agencies may not regularly interact with one another. This makes it very difficult for historically marginalized communities to engage in the offshore wind planning and development process, since they may not know which agency is responsible for which aspect of project development, or they may only have a strong relationship with one agency. Additionally, agencies may not know whether their partners in government have already spoken to particular communities or community-based organizations, which may further burden those organizations by duplicating work.

Explore models of cross-agency and intra-government coordination and collaboration

- Build interagency structures for intragovernmental discussion
 - NJ has regular meetings weekly; it could work elsewhere
 - There is something of a directory
 - It would be good for the interaction be more interactive; there are many more tools now
 - In MA, there is an interagency council. One challenge is how to go beyond information sharing to get to creative group problem solving. Understand each agency's barriers and challenges to get to a shared vision.

- Balance burden of CBOs bringing state agencies together
 - There should ideally be one initial point of contact for community groups to go to with offshore wind questions.
 - An offshore wind community liaison?
 - A picture of the landscape among the agencies should be presented to community groups so that they know the roles of the different agencies
 - This may not be a priority for CBOs to know; there's a fine line between being informative and giving too much irrelevant information to people
 - If something is done, it should be very simple—could be a visual picture

Strengthening Offshore Wind Community Engagement

Recommendations for State Agencies



ABOUT CESA

The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) is a national, nonprofit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy. CESA works with state leaders, federal agencies, industry representatives, and other stakeholders to develop clean energy programs and inclusive renewable energy markets. CESA members—mostly state agencies—include many of the most innovative, successful, and influential public funders of clean energy initiatives in the country. Learn more at www.cesa.org.



ABOUT EQUNIVAL PARTNERS

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