

I-REN Executive Committee

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the I-REN Executive Committee was called to order by Chair Crystal Ruiz at 2:00 p.m. on April 18, 2023, at the San Bernardino Council of Governments, 1170 West Third Street, 1st Floor Board Room, San Bernardino, CA.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Crystal Ruiz led the Committee members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

- CVAG:
 - City of Indio - Oscar Ortiz
- SBCOG:
 - City of Rialto - Deborah Robertson
 - Town of Apple Valley - Art Bishop
- WRCOG:
 - City of Corona - Jacque Casillas
 - City of Jurupa Valley - Chris Barajas
 - City of San Jacinto - Crystal Ruiz
- Not Present:
 - County of San Bernardino - Curt Hagman

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Robertson

SECONDER: Bishop

AYES: Ortiz, Robertson, Bishop, Casillas, Barajas, Ruiz

ABSENT: Hagman

A. Summary Minutes from the March 21, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting

Action:

1. Approved the Summary Minutes from the March 21, 2023, Executive Committee meeting.

B. I-REN Regulatory and Reporting Update

Action:

1. Received and filed.

6. REPORTS / DISCUSSION

A. Approval of Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Agency Budget

Casey Dailey, WRCOG Director of Energy & Environmental Programs, reported that in 2021, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) approved I-REN's budget of \$65.6M, to be distributed in calendar years 2022 through 2027. Local governments operate on a fiscal year, while the CPUC operates on a calendar year, which means that the Committee will be approving half of the remaining calendar year 2023 budget, and half of the following calendar year 2024 budget. The total I-REN budget is part of the WRCOG annual budget, and the WRCOG Executive Committee will meet in May to approve the WRCOG Agency Fiscal Year (FY) 2023/2024 budget. The WRCOG Executive Committee will only be approving I-REN's maximum revenue and maximum expenditure numbers, and the I-REN Executive Committee will be responsible for approving the line items. An Advice Letter will be filed with the CPUC in September to reallocate unspent dollars into the 2024-2027 budgets.

Committee member Art Bishop asked if the Committee is able to approve line items throughout the six year period, or does it have to be done one year at a time?

Mr. Dailey replied that there will not be a need to send another Advice Letter for subsequent years. If there are unspent funds by the end of 2027 then those unspent funds will be returned to the CPUC and I-REN must file for a new Business Plan.

The FY 2023/2024 I-REN budget is allocated by sector: Public Sector, Workforce Education and Training, and Codes & Standards. Line items for each Sector include contracts with various service providers, staffing reimbursements for each COG, outreach, and the budget for direct incentives which will be developed by implementers using I-REN Executive Committee input.

Action:

1. Approved the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Agency budget.

RESULTS: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Casillas

SECONDER: Barajas

AYES: Ortiz, Robertson, Bishop, Casillas, Barajas, Ruiz

ABSENT: Hagman

B. Public Sector Program Updates

Benjamin Druyon, WRCOG Program Manager, introduced Julie Castro from The Energy Coalition, who

gave a presentation on the Public Sector Program. The Energy Coalition partners with Alternative Energy Systems Consulting and TRC for energy engineering support, and Public Financial Management for finance support to complete energy projects.

The Energy Coalition (TEC) offers various project support services. Through energy data collection and analysis, TEC helps I-REN member agencies determine their priorities and figure out which sites to focus on energy efficiency improvements. An energy audit is conducted to come up with measures that the I-REN member agencies can implement to meet those priorities. TEC provides project financial analysis to review all of the opportunities available such as grants, incentives, or financing to cover the project costs, and helps the agency with the application process to obtain funding.

In addition to project support, The Energy Coalition also provides continuous engagement in the diverse communities that the I-REN represents. It begins with territory-wide orientations to introduce I-REN services to member jurisdictions to their determine needs and how the REN can provide support. Capacity building is developed through education via workshops or webinars to grow staff expertise in the various energy project areas. To acknowledge the completion of projects and to inspire similar projects, case studies are done and success is celebrated.

The Energy Coalition collects utility data such as consumption and cost, as well as facility information including age and square footage, GIS data, and more. The Energy Star Portfolio Manager is used to leverage data points as well as individual meters, and compare with other similar facilities. Based on this information, the I-REN member agencies can prioritize the sites they are responsible for and create a plan to target facilities and achieve the overall energy efficiency vision.

Financial analyses are conducted to show project costs, benefits, and savings. TEC looks at outside resources that the I-REN can leverage to reduce the upfront capital needed to make the project possible. This includes grants, financing, and incentives, and TEC will assist with the applications and grant writing.

Committee member Oscar Ortiz would like to include kilowatt hours (kWh) in the metrics to measure the efficiencies of different projects.

Ms. Castro stated that continuous engagement is important to build relationships between the I-REN and their member agencies. Having conversations with the agencies regarding their energy goals will help build a customized plan to help meet their specific needs. Workshops and capacity-building webinars will help increase staff knowledge and skills.

Committee member Deborah Roberts asked what the largest project that The Energy Coalition has engaged in, and would like to weigh the benefits about adopting a micro-grid project.

Rebecca Hausheer from The Energy Coalition stated that the streetlight projects were one of the largest projects, one of which accumulated over eight million kWh in savings. Other large projects are generally water or waste water optimization projects, and building controls can yield significant bill and energy savings.

Committee member Bishop emphasized the importance of continuous engagement and tracking everything because the the I-REN will eventually have to present its accomplishments to the CPUC in order to continue the program.

Ms. Castro explained that the Normalized Metered Energy Consumption (NMEC) program measures savings at the meter. It compares the pre-project consumption with the post-project consumption to evaluate the energy savings through that project. NMEC incentivizes all savings, not just those that meet the California energy code. Traditional programs often incentivize per unit for lighting or HVAC, whereas NMEC incentivizes based on saved kWh. This allows for much greater incentives and savings recognized by the CPUC.

There are different ways to structure program incentives. An incentive structure based on kWh is not concerned when the energy savings are achieved, whereas a structure based on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would be a tiered structure with higher incentives during certain hours of operation. Ms. Castro highlighted that based on the NMEC rulebook, 50% of the total incentive will be paid out after either one year, or two years of project performance.

There are various design parameters that the Committee can consider when customizing the I-REN NMEC Program to fit the needs of the community. The parameters would determine how the incentives would be provided, the incentive rate (kWh and therms vs GHG emissions), additional incentives to recognize certain priorities, and a procurement model with or without equipment and labor included in the model.

Committee member Bishop stated that most City Managers would primarily be concerned about the money that a program can save them, with the other benefits coming second.

The Energy Coalition staff will meet with member agencies through in-person orientation workshops to assess the needs and tailor support for each agency. They will then finalize the Implementation Plan following regulatory requirements, and finally develop and launch those programs and services.

Committee member Ortiz would like to keep in mind that the cooling centers with aging HVAC systems may need to be improved to keep the centers going through the hot summer months.

Committee member Art Bishop stated that the mountain area received heavy snow, and many roofs will have to be rebuilt. He asked if heavier insulation would be included in the energy savings.

Ms. Castro agreed that insulation could be included as a measure in the NMEC program, and can be incentivized if it helps save energy.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

C. I-REN Orientation Meeting(s) Update

Tyler Masters, WRCOG Program Manager, introduced the I-REN Orientation Meetings. There will be 18 half-day meetings, nine in Riverside County, and 9 in San Bernardino County, which are organized by subregional geographic areas. Meetings will take place from May 2023 through the end of summer 2023, and will talk about I-REN background, Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition membership, and services provided by the three I-REN sectors.

Committee member Deborah Robertson pointed out that there is the ICSC conference, as well as other

external meetings in the month of May.

Casey Dailey reassured Committee member Robertson that the dates will be coordinated to avoid conflicting dates. Zoom links will be available for those agencies that wish to attend remotely, or they may attend any of the other meeting dates if their scheduled date is not convenient.

Chair Ruiz is excited about the I-REN program and encourages Committee members to join programs in their region, and be the face of the project.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

D. Equitable Distribution of I-REN Program Resources

This item was the first to be presented.

Casey Dailey, WRCOG Director of Energy and Environmental Programs, discussed the equitable distribution of I-REN resources. The I-REN business plan was written with equity at the center, and focuses on disadvantaged and underserved communities. However, there are some resources available without regard to geography, such as virtual trainings and webinars, and other training and educational materials that will be available to anyone with internet access.

Further examples of how resources will be allocated can be found in the I-REN Energy Fellowship Program, and the I-REN orientation meetings. The primary objective of the Fellowship Program is to place 27 Fellows annually in the I-REN service territory, with 13 in San Bernardino County and 14 in Riverside County. Member agencies would host a Fellow every other year.

For the I-REN orientation meetings, there will be 18 meetings throughout the summer beginning in May 2023. Nine meetings will be held in Riverside County, and nine will be in San Bernardino County. Staff are committed to ensuring that I-REN programs are available to everyone in the region equally, with priority given to those who have historically been left out.

Committee member Jacque Casillas appreciates that equitable distribution is the primary focus, and that the Committee will have an opportunity to create the rules of such distribution when approving the I-REN Strategic Plan.

Committee member Art Bishop thanked staff and is looking forward to seeing the Strategic plan, but appreciates the equity among the three COGs.

Committee member Deborah Robertson would like more clarity on how the webinars, orientations, and Fellowship Program will come about. She stated that using Zoom for the orientation meetings would allow for a bigger audience when people are not able to attend in person.

Committee member Oscar Ortiz added that one of the issues with other RENs has been in the distribution of funds. The flexibility of the I-REN structure allows for unused funds to be distributed to where there is room available.

Chair Crystal Ruiz commended staff, and suggested that I-REN use WRCOG's Fellowship Program structure as a template for its own Fellowship Program.

Actions:

1. Received and filed

7. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Chair Ruiz reported that I-REN meetings for June and July will be cancelled, and the Committee will reconvene in August, 2023.

8. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no items for future agendas.

9. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no general announcements.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next I-REN Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2023, at a location yet to be determined.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:24 p.m. in honor of the late Karlee Meyer, City of Hemet.