

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 May 16, 2023, at WRCOG's office located at 3390 University Avenue, Suite 200, Citrus Conference Room, Riverside.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Committee member Jacque Casillas led the Committee members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

- CVAG:
 - City of Indio - Oscar Ortiz
- SBCOG:
 - County of San Bernardino - Curt Hagman
 - Town of Apple Valley - Art Bishop
- WRCOG:
 - City of Corona - Jacque Casillas
 - City of San Jacinto - Crystal Ruiz

Members absent:

- City of Rialto
- City of Jurupa Valley

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR (Corona / Apple Valley) 5 ayes; 0 nays; 0 abstentions

A. Summary Minutes from the April 18, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting

Action:

1. Approved the Summary Minutes from the April 18, 2023, Executive Committee meeting.

B. I-REN Regulatory and Reporting Update

Action:

1. Received and filed.

6. REPORTS / DISCUSSION

A. I-REN Strategic Planning Update

Mindy Craig from BluePoint Planning reported that BluePoint conducted surveys and spoke to member agencies with regard to the vision and goals for I-REN and has been working with I-REN staff to refine that vision and develop strategies to achieve those goals.

One of those visions is to strive for social and racial equity, which for I-REN means enabling under-resourced communities that have not been supported by the State's shift towards energy efficiency. These equity principles include procedural equity which will prioritize low-income communities and those who have traditionally lacked access due to demographic barrier, distributional equity to make sure programs and services are equally available throughout the I-REN service territory, and structural equity to address and mitigate structural inequities that limit access and engagement of Inland Empire cities and agencies.

Committee members asked whether there will be more clarification on the equity and distribution of resources.

Ms. Craig replied that this will be a discussion about governance, budgeting, and allocations to ensure the Committee is comfortable with how the dollars are spent.

Casey Dailey, WRCOG Director of Energy & Environmental Programs, added that there are goals in place that ensures resources will be equitably distributed.

The four pillars of the organizational goals are:

1. A cohesive region: distributing benefits equally throughout the region
2. First 2 years: delivering a positive impact through a successful launch and roll-out in the first two years of the Strategic Plan
3. Awareness and relationships: be actively involved with all member agencies, tribes, special districts, and partners to engage them as active participants
4. Internal organization strategies: characterized by agility, responsiveness, and accountability

Committee member Curt Hagman asked how the grading and point system will work when demographics are involved versus the need of the equipment and needs of the city.

Mr. Dailey stated that the services are not geographically-based, such as virtual trainings and webinars, and will be available to all. For Public Sector programs, such as NMEC, the Committee will need to be determine if it will be done on a first-come, first-served basis, or if all cities must have one project completed before a city can apply for a second project.

Committee member Hagman asked if having a broad definition of equity will complicate the allocation of resources, and would cities with multiple needs will be given more support?

Committee member Art Bishop stated that City Managers are different and engage differently. What may be good for one city may not be the best for another.

Committee member Jacque Casillas does not see a conflict with including the definitions of equity, but she would like to see examples of what that resource allocation will look like.

Mr. Dailey stated that the equity aspect and how the rebate programs will work are still in active development. Orientation meetings are starting in the hardest to reach areas, which is what RENs are supposed to do to help fill the gaps.

Committee member Oscar Ortiz stated that the having a simple basic framework could be used at the beginning to get the funds out to disadvantaged communities, then that framework can be adjusted later.

Chair Ruiz asked Committee member Hagman where he sees a potential conflict.

Committee member Hagman stated that having too many filters on infrastructure make it difficult to judge. How is an application scored based on socioeconomic demographics versus the project itself? There are better ways to weigh a project rather than with the socioeconomic factors.

Committee member Bishop asked if there is a way to compromise by keeping what is applicable and usable, and removing what is deemed to be a potential hindrance.

Committee member Hagman stated that some cities like Ontario may not have a need for I-REN programs and services, even though they meet certain criteria such as having a 50% minority population.

Committee member Ortiz pointed out that the guidelines do not exclude communities that are not disadvantaged. Services are available equally and do not exclude anyone.

Mr. Dailey stated that the goals may be modified by the Committee if the terminology is presenting more roadblocks than benefits.

Ms. Craig suggested considering having the basic equity definition and removing the definitions of procedural, distributional, and structural equity.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

B. Codes & Standards Program Update

Nancy Barba from Frontier reported that the Codes and Standards framework addresses the barriers when it comes to numerous authorities having jurisdiction. I-REN would compile best practices into locally focused trainings, forums, education, and other tools to aid in understanding, enforcing, and implementing energy building codes throughout the region.

The training and education will focus on outreach and engagement, and building professionals. Market assessment surveys will be sent out to identify the challenges of each agency. After this engagement and successful implementation, I-REN will showcase success stories to further promote its programs and tools.

Committee member Hagman expressed concern about how the equity will be gauged for cities with limited resources versus larger entities.

Ms. Barba stated that training would be provided to current city staff and also to those interested in the field, and depending on the results of the assessment, staff may be provided to fill the gaps for cities where there is insufficient staff. Most training will be available online and tailored to the needs of each jurisdiction.

Technical support will also be provided to cities in the form of model codes and ordinances, periodic surveying, and permitting guides.

Action:

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. The Committee will reconvene in August 2023.

8. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Committee member Ortiz wants to bring back the points on equity.

9. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Karina Camacho, WRCOG Analyst III, gave an overview of the I-REN orientation meetings that have been scheduled. Staff is still confirming dates for the remaining cities.

Casey Dailey, WRCOG Director of Energy & Environmental Programs, added that lunch will be provided at the meetings, and there will be small giveaways for participants. This will engage with and identify the champions in each jurisdiction to start building relationships. Planning Directors, Facility Managers, Sustainability Managers, and City Managers are all welcome to attend.

Cheryl Chestnut from SBCOG welcomed new management analyst, Stacy Morales.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next I-REN Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for August 15, 2023, at WRCOG's office located at 3390 University Avenue, Suite 200, Riverside, CA.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. in honor of the Sheriff Deputy Brett Harris.