



# **Tribal and Community Benefits Working Group**

Secretary of Energy Advisory Board

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# Tribal and Community Benefits Working Group

## Working Group Members



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# Tribal and Community Benefits Working Group

## Project Summary – Charter

### BACKGROUND


DOE commitment to ensuring that the benefit from the investment in the nation's energy transition reach all communities, particularly those historically underserved and those that may be left behind by shifts in policy and technology.

With the passage of the IIJA, the DOE went through a profound shift from an agency mostly focused on research, science, and technical feasibility to one focused on all these things plus major project development and implementation.

- ❑ **Objective #1** [Internal] – embed equity and economic opportunity across DOE (including Labs) policies and programs through various means (e.g., prioritize community engagement within RFPs)
- ❑ **Objective #2** [External] – advance place-based approaches to equitable clean energy transition in specific DOE-funded projects (e.g., commitment to Community Benefits Plan framework)

# Tribal and Community Benefits Working Group

## Report Overview



### Introduction and Methodology

- **Landmark Legislation** – IJIA of 2021 and IRA of 2022
- **Methodology** – interviews, both internal (14) and external (18) stakeholders; used AI apps for data collection (OtterAI), analysis (ChatGPT), and communication (Notebook LM)

### Tracks Overview and Findings

- **Track 1** – Expanding Opportunities and Access Within and Across DOE Programs
- **Track 2** – Implementation of Community Benefit Plans
- **Track 3** – Tribal Consultation and Engagement

### Recommendations

- **Immediate Actions** – within the current Administration
- **Long-Term Actions** – in the next Administration
- **Unique Recommendations** – Foundation for Energy Security and Innovation (“FESI”); and Artificial Intelligence (“AI”) (4)

# Expanding Opportunities and Access Within and Across Programs

## Track 1 – Overview and Findings

- **Overview** – With the passage of the IJA, the DOE went through a profound shift from an agency mostly focused on research, science, and technical feasibility to one focused on all these things plus major project development and implementation.
- **Findings**
  1. **Inconsistent Implementation of Program Support Across DOE Offices** – offices that have been doing place-based projects for years are more immersed in community engagement, while newer offices have less experience and may struggle
  2. **Challenges in Accessing DOE Funding and Resources** – underserved communities face difficulties navigating the complex application processes required for programs
  3. **Need for More Consistent Approach to Expanding Opportunities** – while there have been efforts to increase outreach and support, currently there is a lack of a standardized system for ensuring all offices prioritize expanding opportunities

# Expanding Opportunities and Access Within and Across Programs

## Track 1 – Recommendations

### Immediate Actions

1. Create Regional Support Teams
2. Establish Clear Guidelines for Program Access
3. Launch Technical Assistance Workshops



**FESI**

### Long-Term Actions

1. Re-establish DOE Regional Offices
2. Expand Grant Programs for Local Projects
3. Create a National Database for Program Participation that Supports Interagency Collaboration
4. AI-Based Tools for Equity
5. AI for Climate Resilience



**AI**



**AI**

# Implementation of Community Benefit Plans

## Track 2 – Overview and Findings

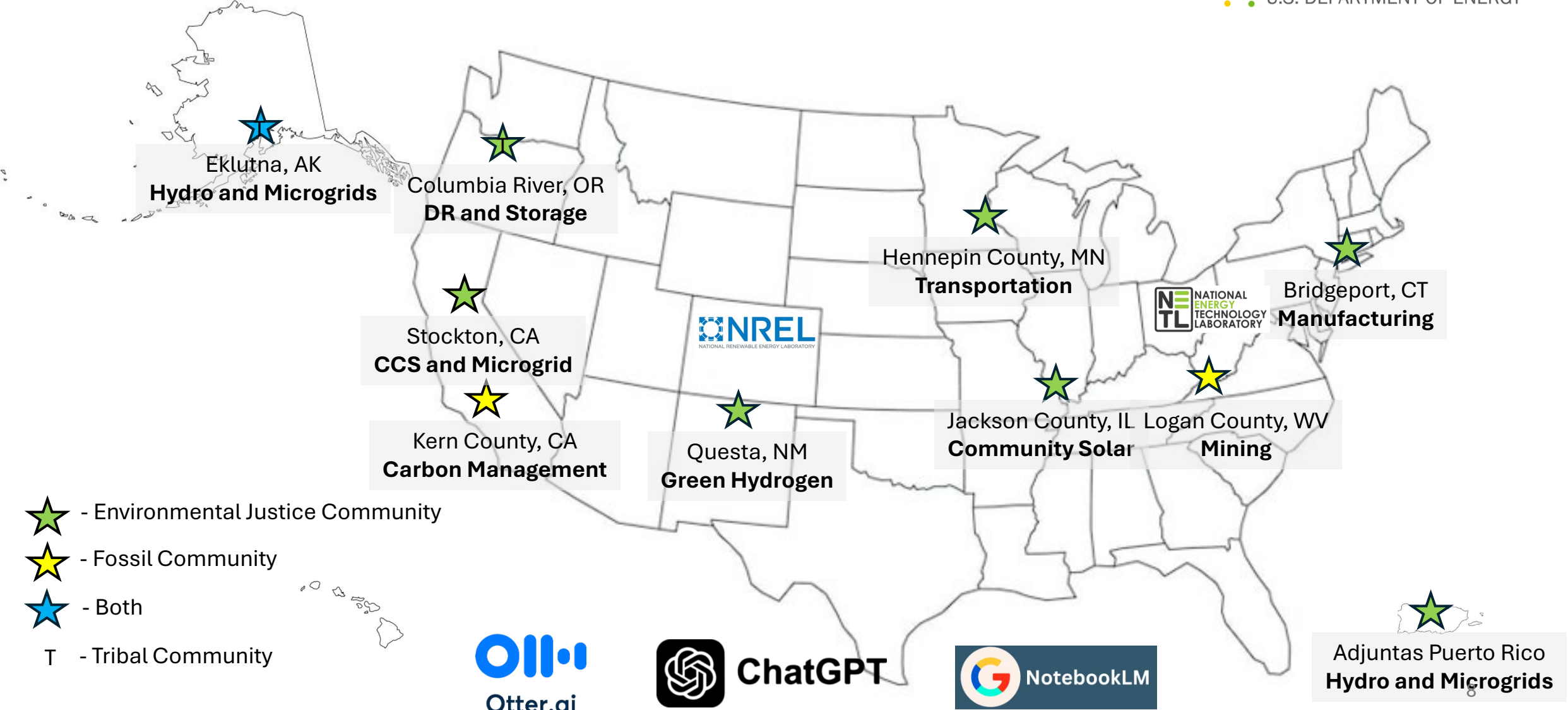
- **Overview** – the DOE’s Community Benefit Plan (“CBP”) Framework\* is designed to ensure that federally funded energy projects provide tangible, lasting benefits to communities in which they are located.
  
- **Findings**
  1. **Limited Early Community Involvement in Project Planning** – too often, key decisions are made before meaningful community engagement takes place
  2. **Inadequate Accountability and Feedback Mechanisms** – there is a lack of consistent data collection and feedback mechanisms to track the success of CBPs
  3. **Inconsistent Execution of CBPs Across Projects** – some projects are closely aligned with community needs and have strong plans in place, while others struggle with execution due to limited resources or guidance

### REFERENCES

\* - CBP Framework was added to many DOE grant and loan proposal evaluation processes under the IIJA and IRA and includes four (4) core policy priorities – (1) investing in America’s workforce, (2) meaningfully engaging communities and labor, (3) advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and (4) advancing the goals of Justice 40.

# Communities Local Energy Action Plan (LEAP)

## Tribal and Community Engagement Across the Country





# Implementation of Community Benefit Plans

## Track 2 – Recommendations

### Immediate Actions

1. Communicate Expectations of Developers on Community Engagement
2. Invest in Contract Negotiators to Speed Up and Professionalize CBP Implementation
3. Standardize Data Collection on CBP Outcomes
4. Bring AI Tools to Tracking and Reporting on CBP
5. Host Knowledge Sharing Forums



AI



FESI

### Long-Term Actions

1. Develop a National Framework for Enforceable CBPs
2. Enhance Capacity Building for Community Leaders
3. Build an Online Repository for Best Practices
4. Focus on Enforceability

# Tribal Consultation and Engagement

## Track 3 – Overview and Findings

- **Overview** – Tribal Nations bring unique perspective and expertise in land management, natural resources, and cultural preservation. Current consultation practices vary across the DOE and its projects, leading to challenges in consistency, trust, and meaningful collaboration.
  
- **Findings**
  1. **Inconsistent Consultation Practices** – approach to consulting with Tribal Nations differs significantly. While some consultations are thorough and collaborative, others occur late, limiting the community’s ability to negotiate and achieve outcomes.
  2. **Reduce Barriers to Respectfully Incorporating Tribal and Other Cultural Knowledge** – integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge into project planning and decision-making has proven difficult.
  3. **Limited Focus on Long-Term Partnerships** – consultations often focused on individual projects, rather than fostering long-term partnerships.

# Tribal Consultation and Engagement

## Track 3 – Recommendations

### Immediate Actions

1. Strengthen and Standardize Tribal Consultation
2. Establish Working Group Partnerships with Tribal Nations
3. Offer Training Programs for DOE Staff
4. Create Pathways for Integrating Traditional Knowledge

**AI**



### Long-Term Actions

1. Create a Permanent Office for Tribal Consultation
2. Use AI to Enhance Tribal Engagement
3. Establish Long-Term Partnerships with Tribal Nations
4. Incorporate Cultural and Other Values-Based Knowledge into National Energy Strategy

# Tribal and Community Benefits Working Group

## Unique Recommendations – FESI and AI

### Foundation for Energy Security and Innovation (FESI)

- Launch Technical Assistance Workshops
- Host Knowledge Sharing Forums

### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Bring AI Tools to Tracking and Reporting on CBP
- AI-Based Tools for Equity
- AI for Climate Resilience
- Use AI to Enhance Tribal Engagement

# **Tribal and Community Benefits Working Group**

Questions and Answers

**Q & A**

# Thank You



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