



# MIDWESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION INITIATIVE

Growing the Communities that  
have Powered the Midwest

**MGA**

*America's Smartland*  
Midwestern Governors Association

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July 2022

It has been my honor to serve as Chair of the Midwestern Governors Association (MGA). Our region's greatest strength is its innovative, hardworking people. Our people are the heart of what makes this region the best place in the world to learn, start a family, grow a business, and build a career.

Over the past few years, the MGA has prioritized energy transmission and transition in the Midwest as a priority issue. The energy transition underway across the nation has presented challenges for many Midwestern communities. Towns and cities that have long hosted energy producers are increasingly re-thinking their economic situation as the power plants that have provided so much economic opportunity transition. It is vital that we ensure a just transition and support these communities and workers and help to provide pathways for their continued success.

As part of our work 'Empowering Midwestern Communities' MGA pursued a year-long effort to craft recommendations that can prepare Midwestern communities for power plant closures. This effort focused on bringing together people from across the region and from varied disciplines to share information and learn from one another. This document is both a summary of these activities and recommendations that were developed based on participant conversations. It is my hope that this dialogue will assist communities and workers that are or will be impacted by an energy transition. I look forward to joining my fellow Midwestern governors in reviewing the recommendations in the report to see how some of these issues and recommendations could help each state's unique situation.

As the MGA welcomes a new incoming Chair to take the reins on this unique and collaborative work, I'd like to thank the MGA staff for their work in convening these conversations around energy transition and all of the participants in the dialogue that led to this report.

I look forward to continuing to help move the Midwest forward.

Sincerely,

Tim Walz  
Governor of Minnesota and  
Chair, Midwestern Governors Association

## Introduction

The [Midwestern Governors Association](#) (MGA) is a non-profit, bipartisan organization that brings together governors and their staff to address public policy issues of significance to the region. Spanning 12 Midwestern states, each year a governor serves as chair of the MGA and is tasked with selecting the year's Chair's Initiative. Under Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, the latest chair's initiative is *Empowering Midwestern Communities*. The focus of the initiative is to address the impacts experienced by energy communities as the nation undergoes an energy transition.

This initiative could not be timelier. Across the country, the energy transition away from fossil fuels, in particular coal, is accelerating. In the Midwest, 55 plants have closed since 2016, and the pace of closures continue to accelerate. Of the 81 coal plants that remain open, 33 percent have announced retirement dates. These power plants are often the largest employers and taxpayers in their cities, and the planned closures could have a significant impact on the community and its workforce.

For this initiative, the MGA partnered with the [Just Transition Fund](#) (JTF), an organization that works across the country with the communities hardest hit by the energy transition. The MGA and JTF team, along with a Kitchen Cabinet (see [Appendix 1](#)) made up of experts in economic development, local impacts, workforce and training, and energy and the environment, organized weekly public meetings to harness the collective wisdom, ideas, and lessons learned from state and local government, industry, workers, the advocacy community, and economic development professionals. The goal of these ongoing conversations was to share ideas, identify challenges and solutions, and gather resources that can assist communities build economic diversification and support impacted workers through the transition.

This initiative investigated how to redevelop energy facilities and create employment opportunities for workers in the community. By bringing together state and local municipal leaders, environmental and social justice advocates, community leaders, workers, and utilities, we can better understand the impact these closures will have on communities and workers and how we can plan for a just transition and a more diversified and inclusive economic future.





This report is intended to advance the conversation around energy transition in the Midwest. Over the last year, dedicated stakeholders from across the region and beyond have joined in weekly conversations to learn from one another and share best practices, lessons learned, and what they wish they'd known earlier in the process. This report captures those best practices and recommendations for further action.

## Overview of Subgroup and Quarterly Meetings

The quarterly full group meetings provided an opportunity for participants to come together to discuss topics that pertained to all aspects of transition planning, including actions at the federal level that impact communities in transition and information about states that are implementing transition policies and actions.

Subgroup meetings provided an opportunity for subject experts to come together to determine best practices and most helpful deliverables for *Empowering Midwestern Communities*. Subgroups met twice per quarter. The outcome from the subgroup meetings included identification of case studies; policy, funding, or program recommendations; and partner development.

The four subgroups focused on the following issue areas. For more information on the conversations that took place in each subgroup, please see "[Topics Covered and Case Studies Highlighted by Subgroup and Quarterly Meetings.](#)"

SUBGROUP	GOAL	
Local Impacts	Provide guidance on how to support municipalities and residents whose tax base, community fabric, and social network are impacted by the energy transition.	
Economic Development	Identify ways to replace the tax base and create jobs in a community that lost coal assets.	
Workforce Training and Education	Provide guidance on how to support displaced workers and others whose employment is impacted by the energy transition.	
Energy and Environment	Identify ways to protect the environment, mitigate legacy environmental costs, understand the regulatory environment, and promote clean energy.	

## Take Action

Many states and communities across the Midwest have already begun to take actions to plan for the energy transition; mitigate the impacts to workers and host communities; and work toward building more inclusive, equitable, and diverse economies. As a region, we can build on the lessons learned from existing transition efforts.

Two high-level best practices came up in almost every conversation that took place as part of this initiative:

### A. Start planning now

- a. Key considerations:
  - i. No matter where you enter the conversation on energy transition – nonprofit, local municipality, elected official, state agency, utility, landowner, business owner, labor leader, fossil fuel worker, clean energy advocate – the time is now to start assessing the impacts of a plant or mine closure; taking inventory of your community, regional, and state assets; and planning for the future.
  - ii. Engage the community around the power plant early in conversations around decommissioning, future land use, and community needs.
  - iii. States and power plant owners should inform and consult with community members on the timing and nature of decommissioning activities and develop and collaboratively communicate appropriate precautions and emergency protocols.

### B. Build cross-sector partnerships

- a. Key considerations:
  - i. Transition is a complex topic that touches many aspects of community and economic development. Reach out to and partner with impact stakeholders, including nonprofit organizations, municipal governments, labor unions, education sector, regulators, utilities, and economic development agencies, early and often to communicate timelines and available infrastructure and important phases of power plant closure.
  - ii. Take a regional approach and reach out to other communities beyond your city and county. Learn from what others in your state, region, and across the county have done to plan for the transition and consider how those lessons learned may fit in your state or community context.

The remainder of this section is divided into three focus areas: 1) policy considerations for Midwestern governors; 2) best practices for communities; and 3) federal level recommendations. Each focus area includes a series of key considerations for the respective audiences.

# Section 1. Policy Considerations for Midwestern Governors

Governors and state agencies are a critical part of the collaboration across entities and sectors that can revolutionize the current economic reality and reinvigorate communities left in the wake of power plant closures.

## WORKFORCE:

### A. Invest in hiring opportunities that recognize individuals' skills.

#### a. Recommendations:

##### i. Consider Joining Coalitions Advancing Skills

1. Workers impacted by power plant closures may possess training and certifications not easily reflected in a job market focused on traditional degrees, creating friction to their next job opportunity. States are uniquely positioned to pivot towards a skills-based future economy and can propel a skills ecosystem forward by joining the work of coalitions like the [Open Skills Network](#) (OSN).

ii. States can also explore implementing data sharing agreements among state agencies that manage workforce and education systems.

##### iii. Review options for Skills-Based Hiring and Career Advancement in State Employment

1. Although businesses will play an important role in skills-based hiring, support from state and local policymakers will be crucial for effective implementation and can lead efforts to pilot or implement skills-based hiring with state workforces. State policymakers are positioned to facilitate partnerships between employers and education providers to efficiently connect displaced workers to jobs, through embracing hiring practices that prioritize skills and competencies.

#### b. Example:

i. States, such as Colorado and Indiana, are working with the [Markle Foundation](#) to bring these practices to scale. In addition, Markle and the State of Colorado have developed a [Skillful State Playbook](#) to support states in developing a skills-based state labor market.



## **B. Investing in opportunities to obtain new skills at a pace, and in a format, that works for the displaced worker.**

### **a. Recommendations:**

#### **i. Consider support for Comprehensive Broadband Access for All**

1. Millions of Americans continue to lack affordable, quality broadband connections making it difficult to manage daily lives, conduct commerce, run a small business, or attend a telehealth visit. For displaced workers in rural communities, broadband access is vital to many educational opportunities as well, where traditional higher education opportunities are limited. Broadband has been a priority for policymakers, as exemplified by 40 governors highlighting broadband infrastructure investments in their State of the State Addresses in 2021. Broadband is the cornerstone of a community's ability to train, reskill, and connect workers to new opportunities and fill vital roles. State policymakers may consider building broadband infrastructure in areas where it does not currently exist and create regulations that keep broadband affordable.

#### **ii. Review Legislation and Regulations that allow Competency Based Education**

1. To advance economic recovery and skills development, states can provide regulations and legislation that support competency-based education models founded in mastery of skills. Laws and rules around funding for higher education institutions, financial aid, and program requirements may also support skills and competencies, not solely credits or hours, as the currency for educational attainment in order to better support adult learners in affected communities.

- b. Examples: Comprehensive broadband is widely supported across multiple federal agencies. (See Appendix 3: Federal Resources section in this document.)

Competency based learning has been endorsed, and in some cases, supported by legislation at the state and school district level. Federal legislation has yet to be passed. Multiple examples and sources of alternative education are included in [this summary](#).

## **C. Invest in financial aid that puts training opportunities within reach.**

### **a. Recommendations:**

#### **i. Consider structuring State Financial Aid to Serve Adult Learners**

1. Many individuals in affected communities are in rural areas where traditional education pathways are difficult to access, especially for adult learners with many life responsibilities. To ensure all learners can advance their careers and participate in rebuilding a stable economy, states may consider reexamining financial aid requirements related to state-based funding for the adult learner-worker to earn high quality online degrees, short-term credentials, competency-based education, and workplace-based training. Adults seeking these types of opportunities need to be considered as a central part of state financial aid systems. Adults in the communities covered in this report need financial support to gain immediate, workforce-relevant knowledge and skills to move into a career that will support themselves and their families.
2. Consider providing life-long access to financial aid programs by removing any time limits, such as number of years after high school graduation, for students to attain additional education and removing any requirements that limit aid to first-time, full-time students.

#### **ii. Consider investing in Financial Aid for Microcredentials & Short-Term Programs**

1. Provide financial aid and support for residents to attain high-quality microcredentials that are competency-based, personalized, validated, and stackable toward a degree, with proven student and employer outcomes. States may also explore allowing flexibility in choice of educational institutions beyond public residential campuses to broaden access to high-quality online and competency-based degrees and training.

b. Examples:

- Indiana provides an [Adult Student Grant](#) of \$2000 geared to the adult learner that can be applied toward a 2- or 4-year degree or certificate.
- The Missouri [Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant](#) provides last-dollar funding for low-income adults pursuing a certificate, degree, or industry-recognized credential in an area designated as high need.
- Utah in 2021 enacted the [Adult Learners Grant Program](#) which provides financial assistance to adult learners pursuing an online degree or certificate in a high need field.
- The Illinois [Monetary Assistance Program](#) allows residents enrolled in a minimum of just three credits access to state financial aid, which provides access to adults enrolled in essentially 1 course at a time.
- South Dakota launched [UpSkill](#) to help dislocated workers reskill rapidly as a response to COVID disruptions in their state's workforce. Using Governor's Emergency Education Relief Funds, South Dakota created eight short-term online certificate programs in high-demand fields. These credentials are offered at little or no cost to the student and can be utilized toward an associate's or bachelor's degree.
- Ohio's [TechCred](#) program offers short-term (less than 1 year) credential by providing grants to employers to upskill employees in high demand technology fields.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

### D. Develop a policy framework for environmental justice

a. Recommendation:

- i. Explore a state policy framework for decommissioning power plants, whether through regulatory, legislative, or executive action that provides for meaningful community engagement and input, and Tribal consultation; considers and incorporates strategies and funding to address community health, economic, and environmental justice impacts; addresses and mitigates environmental impacts; and holds the power plant owner accountable to the decommissioning plan.

- b. Example: [Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act \(CEJA\)](#). This act recognizes structural, historical, and institutional barriers faced by workers and contractors that identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and directs resources and support to reduce those barriers. CEJA invests \$82 million per year in workforce development and contractor equity and will draw \$1.5 billion per year of new private workforce investment to Illinois. CEJA puts coal workers and communities first and guides an orderly transition from coal to renewable energy, investing up to \$137.5 million per year in transitioning communities.

### E. Provide soil and air monitoring for the community

a. Recommendation:

- i. Consider examining state's existing regulatory process for environmental monitoring around energy facilities such as, soil and air monitoring, especially activities that disrupt coal ash containment facilities.
  1. Consider making information regarding the monitoring process and who to contact with questions publicly available to communities.
  2. Make information regarding the monitoring process and who to contact with questions publicly available to communities.
  3. This approach could be funded publicly, privately (by utility as responsible party), or through a hybridized public-private approach.

- ii. Consider making funding available for community-based air monitoring programs

1. Provide funding for community organizations and community partners to structure air monitoring programs based on contaminants of concern and community goals.





- b. Example: Lessons can be learned from the [Shared Air/Shared Action](#) project in Chicago, an example of a 4-year pilot community-driven air monitoring program.

**F. Explore state-funded glide paths for tax base replacement**

a. Recommendation:

i. Explore creating property tax replacement aid programs for local governments

- 1. Large power generating facilities are frequently the largest property taxpayer in the jurisdiction that hosts them, with the plants in some communities making up as much as 75% of the local tax base. Moreover, the methods by which utility property is valued and assessed in many states can cause unique challenges for communities when that property retires—including large portions of the property tax base vanishing immediately upon retirement. Without state support to help local governments create a soft landing, the property tax burden can shift onto other residents and businesses, worsening the financial impacts these communities face.

ii. Evaluate existing property tax aid programs for effectiveness

- 1. Some states have existing property tax aid/revenue sharing programs between the state and local governments intended to ease property tax burdens and help cities provide services to residents. However, some of the formulas used to allocate aid may need to be modified, or additional funding may need to be allocated before these programs can be relied upon to support communities facing power plant retirement.

b. Examples:

- i. New York State’s [Electric Generation Facility Cessation Mitigation Program](#) proposes a 7-year glide path.
- ii. [Minnesota’s Local Government Aid](#) provides formula-based aid to cities, but would need modifications before it could be counted on to help adequately respond to property tax losses resulting from plant retirements.

## G. Provide transition planning support to communities expecting closures

### a. Recommendation:

#### i. Consider creating dedicated staff and centralized resources for transition efforts

1. Power plant retirements present challenges that are greater than individual communities and workers can manage on their own. The state can play a key role in a successful transition, but the expertise needed to respond effectively often spans multiple state agencies.
2. Creating a centralized state planning effort backed by dedicated staff and state resources benefits all stakeholders by encouraging coordination between state, local, and other stakeholders and facilitating the types of multi-disciplinary efforts that contribute to successful transitions.

### b. Example:

- i. States may consider following the example of others like Colorado, which created the [Office of Just Transition](#), or Minnesota, which is currently setting up its Energy Transition Office. These entities dedicate staff and resources to coordinating transition efforts to maximize the impact the state's role can have.

## H. Develop and/or communicate a clear, consistent, and predictable process for retiring plants from the local property tax base

### a. Recommendation:

- i. Even when a retirement date has been set for a power plant, the exact timing, impacts, and steps in the retirement process can remain unclear to local officials. For example, a local government may know their tax base will be impacted, but it may not be clear in state law or regulation when exactly they will feel the impacts. States may also be lacking mechanisms in law that make clear when and how local officials will be provided advance notice of major, impactful steps in the retirement process.
- ii. States may undertake a step-by-step evaluation of the statutes and rules governing the processes of plant retirements. Directly involve representatives of local governments and workers to effectively identify gaps in current law and recommend legislative or rule changes.



## SITE REUSE:

### I. Explore high-growth sectors that align with existing infrastructure and employee skill set

#### a. Recommendation:

i. Work with economic development agencies, regulators, and utilities to explore options for data centers as a potential land use after power plant decommissioning. Data centers have a lot in common with power plants as a land use, including:

1. Data centers require similar skillsets to plant managers and electricians, linemen, safety and high voltage lines, backup power, air/water cooling.
2. Power is the most expensive consideration for data center development, as well as energy infrastructure, fiber, etc.
3. Being next to transmission infrastructure is the top consideration for companies that need data centers.

#### b. Examples:

- i. Due to the energy infrastructure, developable land, and available workforce, Google selected the former Widows Creek power plant in Jackson County, Alabama to turn into their Data Center, which has ~100 full time employees.
- ii. [Digital Crossroads](#) in Hammond, IN transformed a coal-burning power plant into a data center.

## Section 2. Best Practices for Communities

### COMMUNITIES

#### A. Develop a coalition of power plant communities

##### a. Recommendation:

i. Local governments may consider forming an organized partnership or coalition to help navigate plant retirement and advocate for host community needs. A coalition that brings together multiple communities can lead to shared expertise, create a venue for sharing best practices with colleagues, and enhance the political power of individual communities by combining their voices together with peers.

##### b. Example:

i. Minnesota's Coalition of Utility Cities ("CUC") formed in 1998 to advocate at the State Legislature and to give voice to power plant host communities in discussions related to property taxes. As power plant retirement plans have been announced, the CUC has established itself as a key voice in those discussions and spearheaded a number of successful legislative efforts to support plant communities and workers.

#### B. Work with site owners to understand the limitations and opportunities for site redevelopment.

##### a. Recommendations:

- i. Consider holding conversations between the community and landowner to identify next best use
  1. Communities and power plant owners could work together, in advance of a plant closure, to understand the limitations and opportunities for site redevelopment.
  2. Consider conducting a development feasibility analysis. Many communities have done these in coordination with the site owner. This information can allow power plant site owners to make decisions about site redevelopment collaboratively with the community.
  3. Utilities may learn about retaining access to substations.

b. Example:

1. The BC Cobb Plant coal plant near Muskegon, Michigan was purchased by Forsite Development, Inc. The sale, which was approved by the Michigan Public Service Commission, allowed Forsite to demolish the plant and sell the parcel to Verplank, a shipping company that has a well-established presence in the area. Throughout the process, the city worked on behalf of the community to ensure that residents' needs were being met.

**C. Engage with the state agency that conducts and oversee the environmental review process**

a. Recommendations:

- i. Communities and power plant site owners could work with the state agency in charge of conducting and overseeing the environmental review process for site redevelopment.
- ii. Community members may provide feedback to environmental review on key areas of community concern to be included in the environmental review.

b. Example:

- i. Communities can determine if their state has state-level environmental policy acts [here](#).

**D. Identify opportunities for passive income in the community.**

a. Recommendations:

- i. Explore wind and solar as sources of passive income, in particular in areas of high agricultural land use.
  1. There are many examples of places where wind development has provided additional revenue opportunities to farmers. The farmer can still farm the majority of their land.
  2. Requesting community benefits agreements to bring in wind and solar developments can lead to positive impacts to the community, including infrastructure improvements, ability to restore municipal services, and improvements to grid.

b. Example:

- i. Since 2012, over \$1 billion in wind development has been invested in Gratiot County, which has brought increased economic prosperity and contributed to the tax base. Gratiot County government, townships, and schools realized a total of \$57 million in new tax revenue since 2012. The local economy is also directly and positively impacted by land payments to 500 landowners and 28 permanent full-time jobs at the new maintenance and operations facilities for each company. [Gratiot Wind Alternative Development](#)

**E. Examine local ordinances and permits**

a. Recommendations:

- i. Streamline ordinances and permitting processes
  1. Communities can start by looking at their existing master or comprehensive plan to ensure that it is up to date and reflect the current conditions and vision for the community
  2. Examine zoning ordinances and permitting process and consider engaging a planning professional to simplify and update your planning and zoning to make it easier for the types of economic diversification you want to attract to grow in your community
  3. To attract new businesses, other options to explore include creating target areas for development, implementing Tax Increment Financing (TIF), assessing and documenting infrastructure availability.

b. Example:

- i. [Jasper County Economic Development Organization](#) in Indiana created a task force to explore the impacts of a coal plant closure. They revised their comprehensive plan and updated their Unified Development Ordinance.



## Section 3. Federal Level Recommendations

### A. Provide technical assistance to communities

#### a. Recommendations:

- i. Consider establishing and funding local technical assistance for planning and application writing. Focus on small, rural, or isolated communities first.
- ii. Tailor technical assistance to needs of the community using agency staff or private contractors.
- iii. Help communities collaborate locally and regionally.

#### b. Example:

- i. EPA Community Assistance program, Local Foods, Local Places, [EPA Local Foods](#), [Local Places](#)

### B. Create a common application for federal funds

#### a. Recommendations:

- i. Where feasible, consider streamlining the application process with a common entry level application.
- ii. Establish a review committee to determine eligibility across all federal agencies and where funds could be awarded.
- iii. Provide assistance from contractors to help write and review applications.

### C. Broaden ability to receive funds to more communities and groups

#### a. Recommendations:

- i. Consider eliminating the local match and fund preapplication costs for small, rural or isolated communities as has been done for indigenous tribes.
- ii. Explore providing preapproved contractors to perform engineering services for construction applications.

#### b. Example:

- i. [EDA Indigenous Communities American Rescue Plan](#)

## D. Support labor

### a. Recommendations:

- i. Support community stability by requiring remediation and reclamation contractors to use local, unionized labor at prevailing wages.
- ii. Promote entrepreneurs and new or relocated businesses using local labor.
- iii. Support differential wages.
- iv. Permit training with federal funds to occur prior to layoffs.
- v. Protect pensions and medical care.

## E. Revise bankruptcy laws

### a. Recommendations:

- i. Prevent companies from leaving remediation costs to communities and ratepayers.
- ii. Prevent avoiding pension and medical benefits obligations through bankruptcy.



# Topics Covered and Case Studies Highlighted by Subgroup and Quarterly Meetings

Many of the issues overlapped among groups and participants were encouraged to attend any or all groups. The agendas for the groups were driven by participant interests and local needs. As a result, the resources and lessons learned span a wide segment within each issue area. The MGA is pleased with this outcome because it offers a wider view of the problem of power plant closures as well as a great spectrum of approaches to address these closures. The conversations that took place throughout 2021 highlight that while there are shared lessons across communities, multiple approaches should be considered and evaluated by each community to find the suite of actions and solutions that best advances local transitions. The table below offers a high-level overview of the topics discussed or specific case studies highlighted throughout subgroup meetings in 2021.

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## SUBGROUPS TOPICS

### LOCAL IMPACTS SUBGROUP



#### Primary topics:

- Municipal budget issues
- Bringing community together
- Land use challenges/opportunities
- Working with your utility

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#### Conversation highlights and lessons learned

#### Speakers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prairie Island Nuclear plant               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The nuclear plant dominates the economy</li> <li>● Local planning is essential. Start early</li> <li>● Cash flow is needed up front to apply for and receive grants</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Marshall Hallock, Red Wing, MN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working with your utility               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The community needs to build a relationship early with utility, if possible. Meet with them monthly, attend events</li> <li>● The utility needs to provide capacity for communities for writing grants, use data and information to support and attract other industries, and have department focused on community engagement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Mark Osdorf and John Marshall, Xcel Energy  Brad Hall, VP External Affairs, AEP, Appalachian Sky

## Conversation highlights and lessons learned

## Speakers

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bringing the community together<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Start planning and conversations early</li><li>• Build a diverse stakeholder table to gather input/share information</li><li>• Think about opportunities for regional coalition building</li></ul></li></ul> | <p>Marie Pflipsen, Community Development Director, Becker, MN</p> <p>Kevin Blaser, Business Growth/ Development &amp; Energy Specialist, Migizi Economic Development Company, MI</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jasper County, Indiana<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Predictable and clear zoning and permitting are necessary.</li><li>• Create a community task force.</li></ul></li></ul>   | <p>Stephen Eastridge, Executive Director, Jasper County Economic Development</p>   |
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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBGROUP



### Primary topics:

- Financing redevelopment
  - Rethinking the community's future
  - Policy needs
  - Partnership opportunities
  - Reuse of coal assets
  - Rural redevelopment challenges and opportunities
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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Digital Crossroads, Hammond, IN<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coal plant redevelopment</li><li>• State incentives</li><li>• Private funds</li><li>• Data center and rural community economic development successes</li></ul></li></ul>                                | <p>Tom Dakich, Digital Crossroads, Hammond, IN</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Craig, CO economic development strategy<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leveraging public and private dollars</li><li>• Concurrent development strategies</li><li>• Investing in economic development staff</li></ul></li></ul>   | <p>Shannon Scott, Craig, CO</p>                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paulding County, OH wind development<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utility scale wind as economic development</li><li>• Community benefits, agreements</li><li>• Community concerns</li><li>• Zoning considerations</li><li>• Benefits to farmers</li></ul></li></ul> | <p>Tim Copsey, Paulding County, OH</p>             |
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## Conversation highlights and lessons learned

## Speakers

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- Gratiot County Wind farm development

Kevin Beeson, Gratiot County, MI

- Supplement to agricultural tax base
- Collaboration - partnership, zoning
- Construction benefits
- Income to municipalities
- Enhanced regional development
- Wind taxation issues

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- Rural Southeast Ohio

Debbie Phillips, Rural Action,  
Athens, OH

- Lack of capacity to leverage federal assistance – need local TA
- Fighting diseases of despair
- Challenge engaging with the state funds
- No natural city shed or innovation area – must build from within

Tom Johnson, Mayor, Somerset, OH

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Primary topics:

- Workforce Retention
- Skills Matching
- Types of Retraining
  - Level of Credentialing
  - Remote and mobile learning
- Wage Differentials
- Near-retirement support opportunities

Conversation highlights and lesson learned

- Skills matching
  - Define skill sets that may be transferable. Use language across occupations.
  - Challenging to show transferable skills and gaps in skills
  - Identify skills that will increase overall income
  - Ensure workers are preparing for 21st century jobs

Speakers

Jason Jolley, Ohio University, skills matching tools

Kyle DeMaria, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, skills matching tools



## Conversation highlights and lessons learned

- Competency-Based Learning
  - Work with employer partners
  - Partner with workforce investment board
  - Provide coaching/learning model
  - Focus on on-line training
  - Highlight skills versus education

## Speakers

Alison Bell, Western Governors University, MN

Curt Oldfield, Spoon River College, Canton, IL

- Supporting coal workers
  - Greatest impact to union jobs
  - Need for public policy to support workers
  - Need wage replacement
  - Provide robust educational opportunities
  - Retain pension and health care

Jeremy Richardson, Union of Concerned Scientists

Lee Anderson, Utility Workers Union of America

## ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT SUBGROUP



### Primary topics:

- Environmental Justice
- Infrastructure
- Environmental Review Study
- Decommissioning and Land Use

## Conversation highlights and lesson learned

- Former BC Cobb CMS Energy coal plant site, Muskegon, MI
  - Leveraged deep water port
  - Promoted existing industries with reuse
  - Revised zoning to accommodate other uses
  - Negotiated coal ash pond removal
  - Negotiated tax decline with utility

## Speakers

Frank Peterson, City Manager, Muskegon, MI

- Environmental Justice
  - Highlight legacy environmental and health impacts
  - Ensure equitable access to decision making and planning
  - Provide access to future economic opportunities
  - Leverage community power
  - Be aware of environmental policy vs partisan politics

Dr. Indra Frank, Hoosier Environmental Council

Nikki Troutman, NAACP

Kim Wasserman, Little Village Environmental Justice Org.

Susan Thomas, Just Transition NWI

## Conversation highlights and lessons learned

## Speakers

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### • Infrastructure

- Utilities sometimes want to retain access to substations
- Importance of communicating timelines and availability of infrastructure
- Market the ingredients that make a site ideal for repurposing – industrial assets, access to resources, leveraging existing infrastructure, etc.
- Data centers require similar skill sets to plant managers and electricians, linemen, safety and high voltage lines, backup power, air/water cooling
- Attract remote workers with fiber internet infrastructure
- Power is the most expensive consideration for data center development, as well as energy infrastructure, fiber, etc.

Jeff Riles, Google Inc.

Jodi Piekarski, Minnesota Power

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### • Environmental Review Study

- Communities and power plant site owners should work together to understand the limitations and opportunities for site redevelopment and identify the next best use.
  - Consider conducting a development feasibility analysis.
  - Power plant site owners should make decisions about site redevelopment collaboratively with the community.
- Communities and the EPA and/or the state governmental agency that conduct and oversee the environmental review process for site clean-up and redevelopment should engage early and often on the environmental review process.
  - Communities and power plant site owners should work with the state agency in charge of conducting and overseeing the environmental review process for site redevelopment.
  - Community members should provide feedback to environmental review on key areas of community concern to be included in the environmental review.

Tom McKittrick, Forsite Development

Louise Miltich, MN Department of Commerce



## Conversation highlights and lessons learned

- Decommissioning and Land Use
  - The accelerated timeline of coal power closures can catch communities off guard. The Midwest is one of the hardest hit for coal-fired power plant closures.
  - Strong community-utility relationships are key for successful planning. Understand the timeline, job impacts, financial impacts, and potential reuse options.
  - Site planning & infrastructure: use local expertise, examine potential ordinance/zoning barriers for redevelopment
  - Prepare early: impact analysis, community engagement, and early site planning pay off during and after decommissioning, station closure, and revitalization
  - Retrofit all vacant land to diversify tax base before losing power plant revenue. Consider land use around the plant.
  - Without a site plan in place, the pace of clean up can take time that communities don't have
  - On the MISO grid, new power interconnection costs are high and can be preventative for (renewable) power options

## Speakers

Jon Grosshans, Senior Advisor  
at US Environmental Protection  
Agency (EPA)

Ed Nam, Region 5 Director of Land,  
Chemicals, & Redevelopment  
Division, Environmental Protection  
Agency

## QUARTERLY MEETINGS

### QUARTERLY MEETING 1

#### **Keynote Address:**

##### **Understand the Impact on a Local Community**

- Greg Pruszinske, City Administrator, City of Becker, Minnesota

The city of Becker, Minnesota used to be home to the Sherco Power Plant, which was the state's largest coal plant. Participants will learn more about the impact of this plant closure on the local community and how they are planning to continue to thrive without this large employer and significant contributor to the tax base.

**Panel Discussion:** A Better Understanding of the Host Communities Landscape Panelists will represent each of the four subgroup policy tracks that will support this year long effort. Each track represents a series of issues that a community must address when planning for energy transition. Panelists will provide one of the perspectives for their subgroup and how they are supporting the transition in their community.

- **Local Impacts:** Denise Abdul-Rahman, National NAACP Environmental Climate Justice Program (ECJP)
- **Economic Development:** Misty Crosby, Executive Director, Buckeye Hills Regional Council
- **Workforce and Education:** Alicia Uhde, Polytechnic Program Outreach Director, Bismarck State College and Mark Kaufman, Business Representative, IBEW Local 949
- **Energy and Environment:** Jessica Wojcehoski, Director, Electric Supply Planning, Consumers Energy

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### QUARTERLY MEETING 2

#### **Keynote Address:**

##### **The Future of Federal Energy Transition Policy**

This is an opportunity to hear about policy changes affecting the energy transition at the federal level that will impact.

- Karen Skelton, Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy

**Panel Discussion:** State Policy Actions Related to the Energy Transition Panelists will provide information about policies and actions of their individual states and how that is playing a role in the energy transition.

- Julia Barnes, Lead Policy Analyst for Speaker Brian E golf, New Mexico House of Representatives
- Wade Buchanan, Director of the Colorado Office of Just Transition
- Kevin Hansen, Senior Vice President and Head of Public Policy, Empire State Development
- Kevin McKinnon, Deputy Commissioner, Economic Development, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

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## QUARTERLY MEETING 3

### **Keynote Address:**

#### **Update from the Federal Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization.**

- Briggs White, Ph.D., Deputy Executive Director, Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization, National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL)

**Panel Discussion:** Federal Government Resources and Funding Opportunities for Communities impacted by power plant closures and the energy transition Panelists will provide information about policies and actions of their agencies and how that is playing a role in the energy transition. Panelists will also discuss opportunities for funding for communities and how to best access that assistance.

- Michele Chang, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce
- Matthew Dalbey, Director, Office of Community Revitalization, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Kamara Neal, Ph.D., Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development

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## QUARTERLY MEETING 4

### **Keynote Address:**

#### **Update from the Federal Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization.**

- Brian Anderson, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization and Director of the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL)

**Panel Discussion:** Review of Subgroups Subgroup Chairs will provide an overview of the work of their group, lessons learned, recommendations from the process.

- **Local Community Impacts:** Shane Zahrt, Senior Attorney/Lobbyist, Flaherty & Hood
- **Economic Development:** Nancy Norr, Norr Community Solutions, LLC
- **Workforce and Education:** Patrick Baker, Director of Government Relations, Western Governors University
- **Energy and Environment:** Brady Steigauf, Community Energy Specialist, Minnesota Center for Energy and Environment

## APPENDIX 1: Acknowledgements

The 2021 Chair’s Agenda would not have been possible without the support and guidance from the Kitchen Cabinet Committee. This group of individuals provided input in advance of the Chair’s Agenda and throughout the year to help ensure the MGA was covering appropriate topics and themes. The members include:

1. Patrick Baker, Western Governors University
2. Mark Kaufman, IBEW Local 949 (Formerly)
3. Jon Kelly, Office of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan (Formerly)
4. Kevin McKinnon, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
5. Nancy Norr, Minnesota Power (Formerly)
6. Audrey Partridge, Minnesota Center for Energy and Environment
7. Greg Pruszinske, City of Becker, Minnesota
8. Brady Steigauf, Minnesota Center for Energy and Environment
9. Charles Sutton, Office of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan (Formerly)
10. Shane Zahrt, Flaherty & Hood

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1. Western Governors University, [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu)
2. The Just Transition Fund, [www.justtransitionfund.org](http://www.justtransitionfund.org)





## APPENDIX 2: State Based Energy Resources

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	Federal Regulatory Commission
US Energy Information Administration	Coal Energy Infrastructure and Resources
<b>KANSAS</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Kansas Corporate Utilities Commission
State Legislators	Kansas State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Kansas State Energy Profile
<b>ILLINOIS</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Illinois Public Utility Commission
State Legislators	Illinois State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Illinois State Energy Analysis
<b>INDIANA</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission
State Legislators	Indiana State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Indiana State Energy Analysis
<b>IOWA</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Iowa Utilities Board
State Legislators	Iowa State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Iowa State Energy Analysis
<b>MINNESOTA</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
State Legislators	Minnesota State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Minnesota State Energy Analysis
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commission	Michigan Public Service Commission
State Legislators	Michigan State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Michigan State Energy Analysis
<b>MISSOURI</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Missouri Public Services Commission
State Legislators	Missouri State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Missouri State Energy Analysis
<b>NEBRASKA</b>	
Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	Nebraska Public Service Commission
State Legislators	Nebraska State Legislators
Energy Profile Analysis	Nebraska State Energy Analysis

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**NORTH DAKOTA**

Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	<a href="#">North Dakota Public Services Commission</a>
State Legislators	<a href="#">North Dakota State Legislators</a>
Energy Profile Analysis	<a href="#">North Dakota State Energy Analysis</a>

**OHIO**

Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	<a href="#">Ohio Public Utilities Commission</a>
State Legislators	<a href="#">Ohio State Legislators</a>
Energy Profile Analysis	<a href="#">Ohio State Energy Analysis</a>

**SOUTH DAKOTA**

Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	<a href="#">South Dakota Public Utilities Commission</a>
State Legislators	<a href="#">South Dakota State Legislators</a>
Energy Profile Analysis	<a href="#">South Dakota Energy Analysis</a>

**WISCONSIN**

Public Service/Public Utilities Commissions	<a href="#">Wisconsin Public Services Commission</a>
State Legislators	<a href="#">Wisconsin State Legislators</a>
Energy Profile Analysis	<a href="#">Wisconsin Energy Analysis</a>

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## APPENDIX 3: Case Studies and Resource Links

### Case Studies

- [CPLC Stands With Chicago's SE Side in Hunger Strike Against General Iron Mov](#)
- (Google Folder) [How the MPCA approaches its push toward environmental equity \\_ MinnPost.PDF](#)
- [Lax Oversight Of Coal Plant Demolitions Could Leave Illinois Communities Vulnerable](#), St Louis Times
- (Google Folder) [Waukegan-Case-Study.pdf](#)
- <http://collectivecommunities.weinbergnewtongallery.com/speaker-series-03-25>
- <https://linktr.ee/JustTransitionNWI>
- [https://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article249877523.html?ac\\_cid=DM404106&ac\\_bid=-285593373](https://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article249877523.html?ac_cid=DM404106&ac_bid=-285593373)
- [Open Skills Network \(OSN\)](#). The OSN was launched in 2020 as a collaboration of hundreds of employers, government entities, and higher education institutions that are working on making our labor markets more competitive, efficient, and easily navigable by individuals of all backgrounds. The OSN is working to ensure the data needed to support skills-based education and hiring is accessible and machine-readable through a centralized network of open skills libraries. States can provide valuable insight into these efforts, which will smooth the transition to skills-based practices for employers and educational institutions.

### Energy 101

- [www.midwesterngovernors.org/wp-content/uploads/MID-GRID-2035/TransmissionPlanningPrimer.pdf](http://www.midwesterngovernors.org/wp-content/uploads/MID-GRID-2035/TransmissionPlanningPrimer.pdf)
- [www.midwesterngovernors.org/wp-content/uploads/MID-GRID-2035/TransmissionPlanningBrief.pdf](http://www.midwesterngovernors.org/wp-content/uploads/MID-GRID-2035/TransmissionPlanningBrief.pdf)
- [FERC 101: Electricity Regulation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission](#)

[Federal Funding Sources can be found here.](#)

## APPENDIX 4: Midwest Transition Actions

### Renewable Portfolio Standard Goals by State

In recent years, many states have adopted Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) or Clean Energy Standards (CES). RPS and CES are regulatory mandates that require utilities (either all utilities in a state or investor-owned utilities only, depending on the state) to generate a certain percentage of electricity from a particular technology, which varies depending on how a state defines clean or renewable energy sources.

For a list of states that have passed RPS or CES Legislation since 2018, visit the National Conference of State Legislatures at [State Renewable Portfolio Standards and Goals \(https://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/renewable-portfolio-standards.aspx\)](https://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/renewable-portfolio-standards.aspx)



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