

Hood River County Energy Council

Organizational Guidelines

I. Mission

The mission of the Hood River County Energy Council (HRCEC) is to facilitate the implementation of projects that responsibly increase energy independence and economic benefits related to energy use and resiliency, and reduce fossil fuel consumption.

II. Purpose

The purpose of the Hood River County Energy Council is to serve as an advisory body to the agencies that have approved by resolution, the Hood River County Energy Plan as well as to the citizens and public and private partners who are committed to helping Hood River County meet the goals of the plan.¹

The council seeks to:

- A. Build expertise in the community — in the form of social capital, financial capital and human capital — to support clean energy projects in Hood River County.
- B. Maintain and build key relationships with partners.
- C. Work with regional public and private entities to collectively increase investment in clean energy and energy conservation projects around the Columbia River Gorge.
- D. Track progress toward Energy Plan goals.

The council openly invites partners and stakeholders to collaborate on energy projects and related opportunities. The council aims to assist with introductions, connect and inform opportunities, help with coordination, fundraising and potentially apply resources.

¹ *Utility-scale wind and solar generation are being built in our region. Recent executive orders and regulations include those to reduce haze and emissions and transition to a lower carbon economy. We have seen announced retirements of coal-fired generating units, as well as removal of hydroelectric-producing dams. Changes to the generation resource mix will present new reliability challenges and many opportunities as more non-synchronous generation is added to the system.*

III. Goals

The Council is working to achieve the long-range goals of the Hood River County Energy Plan, which are as follows:

- A. **Reduce fossil fuel use.** Specifically, replace power generated from fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy in buildings, water systems, and transportation by 30% in 2030, 50% in 2040 and 80% in 2050, as compared with 2016 levels.
- B. **Improve resilience and energy independence.** Specifically, generate 50% of the county's energy needs from local diversified energy sources and storage capacity by 2050. Increase overall capacity, price security, energy generation control and stability, and provide key services in the event of an emergency.
- C. **Increase investment in local renewable energy resources.** Specifically, strategically utilize \$25 million in revolving funds by 2025 to enable local projects and create a business environment that supports our Energy Plan goals. Benefit the local economy by increasing investment in clean energy technologies and decreasing out-of-region and out-of-pocket expenditures. Keep dollars spent and dollars saved on energy in the community.

IV. Background

Between 2016-2018 The Hood River Energy Plan Steering Committee – with input from key partners – completed The Hood River County Energy Plan (download <http://hrccd.co.hood-river.or.us/> => Departments => Planning and Zoning), which provides a blueprint to help our community work toward the three goals listed above.

The Hood River County Energy Plan was adopted by four government agencies in 2018 (Hood River County, City of Hood River, Port of Hood River, Port of Cascade Locks). The energy plan was developed with the help of a group of stakeholders operating as the Hood River County Energy Plan Steering Committee. Funding came from the four agencies listed above, along with the City of Cascade Locks, the Energy Trust of Oregon and the Ford Family Foundation.

The Hood River County Energy Council (HRCEC) was formed in Fall 2018, replacing the Hood River County Energy Plan Steering Committee. HREC operates under the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD), which provides economic development, coordination, business assistance, and industry development within a five-county district. (Three counties in Oregon: Hood River, Wasco and Sherman, and two counties in Washington: Skamania and Klickitat, all bordering the Columbia River.)

V. Guiding Principles

HRCEC uses the following principles to guide their decision making and efforts.

- A. Equity: Focus on addressing the problems of and reducing disparities for underserved communities of color, people with disabilities and people experiencing energy burden. In practice this means:
 - 1. Committing to creating and using an Equity Lens in council operations and project selection.

- B. Impact: Advance strategic initiatives that have multiple benefits, achieve one or more Energy Plan Goals, and deliver metrics of success. In practice this means:
 - 1. Setting and maintaining near-term measurable targets for 1) fossil fuel reduction, 2) resilience and energy independence, 3) local investment in clean energy.
 - 2. Determining metrics of success by which progress will be measured.
 - 3. Evaluating (to the extent possible) how a strategic initiative affects progress toward Energy Plan goals, and prioritizing projects that address multiple goals.
 - 4. Assess and mitigate unintended consequences of strategic initiatives.
 - 5. Bring the greatest value (economic benefits, emergency preparedness, resilience) to the largest number and diversity of residents, businesses and public entities within Hood River County.

- C. Collaboration: Be effective partners with public and private organizations (local and regional), academia, non-profit organizations and other communities working toward similar goals. Seek to listen and build relationships. In practice this means
 - 1. Identifying shared visions, overlapping values, and areas of interest with partners.
 - 2. Maintaining regular communication with partners at agreed upon level.
 - 3. Frequently seek out areas of priority alignment with partners and identify shared opportunities.

- D. Continuous Evaluation: Acknowledge the goals of the Hood River County Energy Plan are long-term and meeting those goals will require ongoing evaluation, refinement and collaboration. In practice this means:
 - 1. Regularly evaluating progress towards goals and communicate progress.
 - 2. Understand the push and pull between achieving numeric targets and tangible community benefit, updating goals and targets where appropriate.

3. Regularly evaluate the impact of communication efforts and adjust accordingly.
- E. **Transparency:** Make meetings and data accessible to the public so that the Hood River County community can understand and evaluate the Energy Council’s decisions, and design innovative solutions of their own. In practice this means:
1. Making organizational documents, work plans, decision-making criteria, and strategic initiatives public and accessible.
- F. **Innovation:** Pursue innovative technology solutions, communication methods and partnerships where there is opportunity to add value. In practice this means:
1. Continually educating ourselves and our community about technological advancements, communication methods, and strategic relationships.
 2. Commitment to investigating and pursuing, when they add value, innovative solutions to problems.

VI. Council Member Roles & Responsibilities

Roles: The HRCEC will be comprised of no fewer than 7 people and no more than 11 people. The HRCEC will be comprised of at least one representative from all public entities that have adopted the Energy Plan, are actively involved, and are actively funding its efforts.

The HRCEC will strive to include council members representing all Hood River County residents, and the following industries: agriculture, manufacturing, buildings, transportation, energy, water and land use and seek to include diverse perspectives, including those of underserved communities.

The HRCEC will elect a chair, co-chair and secretary who will serve two-year terms.

- A. **Time Commitment:** All members of HRCEC are expected to serve a one or two-year term (in year 1, positions will be staggered). Meetings will be held at least once a month for an average of 1.5 hours and are open to the public. Council members may be expected to spend an average of 2-4 hours per month on Council activities (including but not limited to serving on action committees, providing support to projects, connecting efforts, etc). .
- B. **Responsibilities:**
HRCEC members are expected to:

1. Operate under our Guiding Principles (listed in Section IV) and understand the status of the Energy Council Work Plan.
2. Appreciate the significance of projects for some or all major stakeholders and represent their interests;
3. Be an advocate for broad support for the benefits pursued by the Energy Council;
4. Provide support for strategic initiatives where appropriate based on Energy Council member expertise and availability.

In practice, this means they:

1. The Chairs will work with the Energy Coordinator to convene and facilitate Energy Council meetings, writing and distributing minutes, and holding people accountable;
2. Attend meetings and review prep materials;
3. Ensure the projects being pursued by the Energy Council provide benefits to public entities and taxpayers;
4. Help balance conflicting priorities and resources;
5. Provide guidance to the Energy Coordinator and partners;
6. Foster positive communication outside of the Energy Council regarding the group's progress and outcomes;
7. Report on project progress to those responsible funding and implementing projects, such as government bodies and funders.

VII. Focus Areas

Buildings: Pursue strategic initiatives that improve the energy efficiency of new and existing residential, commercial, and industrial buildings and result in buildings that support human health, provide economic gains, and reduce fossil fuel carbon use. Establish strategies that make the HRC built environment technologically advanced and natural disaster resilient through energy design and emerging technology adoption.

Transportation / Mobility / Land Use: Pursues strategic initiatives that shift behavior to low or net-zero modes of transportation and reduces fossil fuel impacts of travel, including smart planning techniques, infrastructure design, alternative fuels, and mobility share. Ensure residents who spend a disproportionate share of their income on transportation costs receive the most benefit.

Agriculture and Water: Pursue water system improvement initiatives that will increase the overall efficiency of water delivered to water users and farms (and ultimately the amount of energy used) while maximizing the potential of energy available within the pressurized water systems.

Community Scale: Pursue project initiatives that identify renewable energy generating resources and/or storage facilities in a way that prioritizes energy independence and resilience across the community.

VIII. Framework & Decision Making

The HRCEC will maintain a one and three-year Work Plan to help guide its efforts, and to serve as a blueprint for reaching the goals of the Energy Plan. The Energy Council will work together with volunteers and Focus Area experts to identify and prioritize initiatives for the Council to partner on. These initiatives will be public and will be informed by projects brought to the Council.

A. **Review Criteria:** Recognizing that solving complex problems requires collaboration and communication, HRCEC invites partners and stakeholders to notify the council of potential energy projects and opportunities for collaboration. The Energy Council is committed to decision making transparency and will use the process outlined below to engage the public, vet projects, and select projects to support.

1. To receive HRCEC support (i.e. staff time, funds, assets), a project must be designed to meaningfully accomplish one or more of the following outcomes:
 - a) Significantly impact Energy Plan goals (metrics required).
 - b) Reduce an inequity/disparity (supported by data and/or information identified by, serving or approved by underserved communities).
 - c) Benefit Energy Plan adopting governing bodies (example reduce the energy costs of government buildings, transportation fleets and other publicly owned projects, or generate income for local public entities).
 - d) Support a current, strategic Energy Council initiative .
2. In addition, the project proposal must identify the following:
 - a) The extent which benefits (economic, physical, etc) from the project are shared by a variety of diverse in-county stakeholders (public entities, private entities, residents, underserved communities.)
 - b) Which Hood River County Energy Plan Focus Area(s) and which Energy Plan Goal(s) the project addresses.
 - c) Define who may be burdened and who will benefit (e.g. understand what unintended consequences may occur) and explain mitigation strategies.

- d) Demonstrate that a majority of stakeholders have provided input on the project or supply a plan to contact stakeholders (and list who those are).
 - e) Prepare a logical, realistic plan for implementation and demonstrate awareness of potential factors and problem areas where assistance may be needed. Identify available expertise, funding needs, community buy-in, amount of staff or volunteer time needed, etc.
3. Based on the scope and number of proposals submitted, HRCEC will prioritize its available resources and ability to support projects based on each projects' comparative level of achieving desired outcomes, and the strength the proposals and written assessments. Per (B), below.

B. Review Process:

1. Using a transparent, open process, the Energy Council will set and review its Work Plan once a year. HRCEC invites the public to offer suggestions and feedback to the Council on what initiatives should be pursued as part of the Work Plan. Work Plans will be made public.
2. Projects seeking Energy Council support can be submitted on an ongoing basis by submitting a project proposal. The Energy Council will strive to assess and respond to submissions within 30 days, and determine how it can support the project based on the process outlined herein.
3. To gain formal HRCEC approval of the Work Plan, MOUs, partnerships, or annual budget, there must be a quorum present.
4. Members will recuse themselves from a vote if their financial interest presents a conflict of interest.
5. Individuals within the Council may choose to provide support for a project on an individual basis but will not seek staff support.

C. Ongoing Duties: The Energy Council works on a continual basis to:

1. Develop and analyze energy use, maps, baselines and inventories. Maintain records of plan metrics and track progress to goals.

2. Evaluate and recommend improvements to laws, regulations, policies, and programs to encourage clean energy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, smart growth, equity, and regional collaboration.
3. Expand local connections to Energy Trust of Oregon and utility services and incentives.
4. Assist with capacity building by involving and educating community members in a community energy planning process and metrics of success.
5. Evaluate success of strategic initiatives and overall progress towards Energy Plan Goals.

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