

Summary of the Business for Local Energy Symposium Discussion Groups

These are the notes from the key points that came out of the afternoon Discussion Groups at the symposium. Thanks for your interest and participation.

Electric Vehicles – how do we make it easier to own one?

Resource Expert: BC Capps, County of Sonoma's Energy and Sustainability Division

Facilitator: Brant Arthur, Center for Climate Protection

Highlights:

- Buying personal electric cars vs. getting people into electric vehicles
- Longer vehicle test drives so people can become familiar and comfortable with them
- Nexus between Community Choice Energy programs and EV owners (adding an EV to a home can double electricity use. How can a CCA make it more financially attractive)

1. Challenge: Lack of information on EV and infrastructure, public awareness

Solutions:

1. A program to allow longer term test drives for EVs and/or short term rentals
2. EV on vacation experience like Orlando where you fly into the airport, rent an EV, get a full list of places you can charge (hotels, restaurants), set this up for Napa or Sonoma, facilitated by local Community Choice Energy program.
3. More ride and drive events, including show and tell events (like existing events at Coddington)
4. Awareness campaign on perceived costs, including awareness of HOV stickers
5. Remove billing/rate complexity (different billing rates, time of use, special EV rates). Community Choice Energy programs could take this on and propose a simple solution.



2. Challenge: Range anxiety/comfort

Solutions:

1. Increased freeway signage about existence of charging facilities (like current signage for diesel, etc.)
2. Smartphone app to track your actual mileage and compare that to what you think you drive (plus help evaluate what kind of EV would be suitable for your situation).
3. Be able to charge where you are at workplace for convenience and sense of security. Google is now up to 350 charging stations. If you create the charging station capability, there is a "build it and they will come" response. Work with business leaders to move this forward.
4. Consolidated location for information (charging station locations, installing in your home and/or business, examples include [recargo.com](https://www.recargo.com))

Community Choice Energy – critical issues, state policy and next steps for accelerated adoption

Resource Experts: Geof Syphers, Sonoma Clean Power and Beth Kelly, Marin Clean Energy

Facilitator: Ann Hancock, Center for Climate Protection

This discussion group identified the following top three challenges and solutions to accelerated adoption of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) in California:

1. Challenge:

- Political Leadership
- How do we organize? Determine political will, participants, structure?

Solutions:

- Provide plug-and-play CCA models that include an easy starter kit for communities to enact.
- Learn from Marin Clean Energy and Sonoma Clean Power
- Gather best practices
- Market to public agencies
- Create online clearinghouse
- Create Dummy's Guide to creating a CCA (close the information gap)
- Develop a standardization process to develop a CCA
- Sonoma Clean Power and Marin Clean Energy collaborate with Californians for Energy Choice to develop the Dummy's Guide and the clearinghouse about CCA development.

2. Challenge:

- Engaging the business community
- How to bring along business leaders and local elected

Solutions:

- Find strong champions
- Rely on those who have already done it
- California League of Cities to do outreach
- Ask Chamber of Commerce to support
- Ask coalitions to reach out to local electeds



3. Challenge:

- How do we find financing?
- How do we start the conversation and with whom?

Solutions:

- Start seed funds in the form of venture capital to get CCAs to a point where banks can then step in and finance them

- Secure city funding for feasibility studies
- Get support from local non-profits, foundations and individual donors, local banks

Commercial and residential solar installations – current programs and visioning the future

Resource Expert: Amy Rider, Sonoma Clean Power

Facilitator: Kristin Berger, Center for Climate Protection

Over 30 commercial property owners, non-profit representatives, service providers, tenants and utility customers attended the commercial and residential solar installation discussion group. Participants began their discussion by identifying the following *perceived* barriers to installing solar:

- Zoning limitations for large-scale solar projects
- Rate structures are not financially attractive enough. The price paid for different times of day and year may create a disincentive for different designs and applications; it creates a mismatch of when electricity is needed from when its generated.
- Scaling - matching size of installation projects with funding and power output and storage
- Competition for customer attention and money
- High cost and insufficient financial incentives
- Lack of effective/unbiased educational forums to increase awareness of different models
- Complexities of going solar
- Customer mistrust of solar providers and their perceived motivations (\$\$)

The group agreed that these barriers could be addressed by a non-profit serving as a centralized go-to hub for providing resources and support to communities throughout California. The success of such an entity would require that it effectively offer the following services:

- Identifying scalable projects and right-sized markets for solar projects
- Database of resources – like California Solar Statistics
- Peer to peer networking
- Information sharing
- Solar/energy consultants
- Standardization of solar bids to make it easier to compare bids from different companies
- More objective public resources perceived as trustworthy by businesses and homeowners
- Advocacy for solar – like Solar Sonoma County
- Creative financing structures – like Sonoma County Energy Independence Program
- Simplifying the message to increase awareness and make going solar easier to understand and implement
- Convening government representatives, vendors, property owners and customers in conversation for problem-solving and sharing best practices
- Customer service for navigating the system and connecting people and resources

What would it take to pilot a microgrid project in Sonoma County?

Resource Expert: Greg Thomson, Clean Coalition

Facilitator: Woody Hastings, Center for Climate Protection

The microgrid session was well-attended, with approximately a quarter of the attendees directly involved in microgrid development and another quarter involved in energy in some way. Participants broke into three groups and engaged in robust conversations to identify the greatest challenges and opportunities for developing a microgrid project in Sonoma County or anywhere.

All three groups came to very similar conclusions about the main challenges and potential solutions for microgrid development whether in or outside of Sonoma County.

Challenges:

1. Interconnections to the grid (Utilities are resistant to microgrid interconnections and CPUC does not push hard enough to make sure unnecessary obstruction is not occurring)
2. Cost (e.g., storage is expensive but makes intermittent renewables more valuable)
3. Defining microgrids for policymakers and the public and educating about the benefits (Microgrids are defined within the sector but it needs to be improved for general public); Answer the question: Why a microgrid?
4. Deploying in a win/win/win model that benefits customer/community/utility

Solutions (commensurate with the challenges listed above)

1. Businesses and other stakeholders work to encourage CPUC to institute and enforce better rules and regulations that promote development of microgrids
2. Develop ways to monetize the value (such as CO2 reduction, load-shape smoothing) of microgrids that are not fully monetized and offset the cost of microgrid with the value they produce; recognize the value of increasing capacity of intermittent renewables; start small;
3. Create a microgrid educational clearinghouse; make information about microgrids less technical and more user friendly; do a good job of answering the question: why a microgrid?
4. Develop a very publicly accessible microgrid as a case study that optimizes win/win potential and do a good job of making the project known, sharing the model with the rest of the world