

# "CRACKING THE CODE: UTILITY & REGULATORY ENGAGEMENT" WORKSHOP



Prior to New Bayou | Workshop Designer & Co-Facilitator | Smart Electric Power Alliance (SEPA), September 2025



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Designed and delivered 4-hour workshop equipping community-based organizations, advocates, and developers to effectively engage with utilities and regulatory bodies. Workshop demystified complex institutional systems and provided practical tools for navigating formal engagement processes. Presented at RE+ 2025 conference to 60+ participants.

## CHALLENGE

Community organizations and small developers often lack foundational knowledge of utility business models and regulatory processes, creating barriers to effective participation in decisions that directly impact their communities and projects. This knowledge gap perpetuates power imbalances in energy planning and policy. Participants needed both systems-level understanding and practical skills to engage meaningfully in rate cases, distribution planning, and integrated resource planning processes.

## APPROACH

- **Curriculum Development:** Created framework breaking down three distinct utility business models (investor-owned, municipal, cooperative) and their decision-making structures
- **Stakeholder Mapping:** Designed accessible explanations of regulatory ecosystem players and how they interact to set market rules and influence grid access
- **Process Navigation:** Developed practical guidance on formal intervention processes including general rate cases, distribution planning dockets, and Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs)



## APPROACH (CONT.)

- **Experiential Learning Design:** Created role-play exercise where participants assumed perspectives different from their own—presenting cases to peers acting as decision-makers—to build empathy for diverse stakeholder positions and practice strategic framing
- **Mixed-Audience Design:** Structured content for participants ranging from grassroots advocates to experienced developers, ensuring accessibility without sacrificing depth
- **Expert Co-Facilitation:** Partnered with regulatory and industry experts from SEPA and the Solar Energy Industry Association to provide both systems knowledge and real-world practical guidance

## OUTCOMES

- Equipped 60+ participants with foundational vocabulary and frameworks for utility/regulatory engagement
- Provided actionable tools for navigating specific proceedings (rate cases, IRPs, distribution planning)
- Built participant confidence to engage in formal processes that shape grid access and energy markets
- Created replicable training model for capacity-building across the clean energy sector

## WHAT THIS DEMONSTRATES

This workshop demonstrates New Bayou's training methodology: translating complex institutional systems into accessible frameworks, creating experiential learning that builds empathy across stakeholders, and equipping people with practical skills to navigate formal processes. The approach of meeting people where they are with information they need, then building confidence through practice, applies directly to any community engagement where residents need to understand unfamiliar systems and participate meaningfully.



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