

# Bonneville Power Administration Draft Public Involvement Policy Month Date, 2026



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# 1 Introduction

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is a federal entity subject to diverse statutory and regulatory requirements and, in fulfilling its statutory mission, conducts public engagement activities spanning a wide variety of subject-matter areas. BPA has a long history of proactive engagement in support of public involvement. BPA tailors each Public Involvement Process it conducts to the circumstances at hand by offering those public engagement activities appropriate to the subject matter, the scope of the effort, applicable statutory directives and regulations, and time constraints.

## 1.1 Scope

BPA's Public Involvement Policy affirms the agency's intent to provide meaningful opportunities for public engagement. Many of the public involvement opportunities that BPA offers arise out of existing legal directives or established processes. As such, those directives exclusively determine BPA's obligations. For example, BPA follows the Public Involvement Processes established under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with the Department of Energy's NEPA procedures and regulations. Any activity that has a defined process or procedure that is published outside of this Public Involvement Policy will not be subject to Sections 2 through 4 below. Those processes may choose to adopt similar practices or nomenclature but are only required to follow the processes or procedures that are published.

Section 3, General Public Involvement Practices, describes the kinds of engagement activities BPA may conduct during a Public Involvement Process for a particular initiative and sets forth a number of best practices that BPA follows, as appropriate. Section 4, Public Involvement in the Formulation of Major Regional Power Policies, sets forth the Public Involvement Process that BPA will conduct when it intends to formulate a major regional power policy subject to Section 4(g) of the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act (Northwest Power Act).

Notwithstanding the best practices described in Section 3 and the Public Involvement Process established for the formulation of Major Regional Power Policies by Section 4, the BPA Administrator retains the full scope of discretion allowed by law to initiate, design, and conduct public involvement opportunities that balance meaningful public engagement with Bonneville's mandate to operate in a sound and businesslike manner.

## 2 Definitions

### *Interim Public Feedback*

During a Public Involvement Process, any written statement by a party that expresses an opinion on the subject matter of the process or the process itself and that is submitted outside of an Official Public Comment period. BPA staff may solicit Interim Public Feedback on specific issues during a Public Involvement Process by providing a prompt and instructions on how to submit a statement. BPA is not required to publish Interim Public Feedback.

### *Official Public Comment*

During a Public Involvement Process, a written statement by a party in response to the publication of a proposal offered by the BPA Administrator for public comment that expresses an opinion on the proposal and that is submitted in conformance with published instructions. BPA receives, publishes, and archives Official Public Comments at [publiccomments.BPA.gov](https://publiccomments.BPA.gov) or its successors.

### *Public Involvement Process*

A set of public engagement activities conducted by BPA to facilitate the involvement of interested parties in the development of a particular agency initiative that includes opportunities for members of the public to share their perspectives, knowledge, and views directly with the BPA staff members working on the initiative.

### *Publish*

The provision of materials in an electronic format on [BPA.gov](https://BPA.gov), or its successors, or through publication in the Federal Register. Materials are considered published on the date they appear on [BPA.gov](https://BPA.gov) or, if publication in the Federal Register is required by law or regulation, the date they appear in the Federal Register.

## 3 General Public Involvement Practices

BPA employs many strategies to inform the public on issues related to BPA's activities. BPA's public engagement activities span a wide range of issues, constituents, and actions. The Public Involvement Processes that BPA conducts offer opportunities for direct involvement that are appropriate to the complexity of the subject, the resources of the interested public, and the impacts of any potential decision or action.

When BPA elects to offer public involvement opportunities for matters not covered by an existing legal directive or an established Public Involvement Process, or elects to provide additional opportunities for public involvement beyond those required by such a directive

or process, the following sections of this policy (3.1- 3.4) describe the public engagement activities it may conduct and some of the best practices it recognizes.

If BPA determines that it needs to expedite a Public Involvement Process, BPA may bypass or conduct modified public involvement activities. BPA will endeavor to carry out the best practices for public involvement activities on the compressed timeline to the extent practicable.

### 3.1 Notice

When initiating a Public Involvement Process, best practice is to publish a notice that states the subject matter of the process, the anticipated timeline for events and milestones, whether BPA will offer an Official Public Comment period, and the anticipated product of the initiative, e.g. a policy statement, a methodology, etc. Early in the process, BPA will also state the anticipated conclusion of the Public Involvement Process, such as a close-out letter or a record of decision. After initiating a Public Involvement Process, best practice is to publish notices for: the release of relevant materials; public meeting information and agendas; the start of Interim Public Feedback periods and Official Public Comment periods, if conducted; and modifications to any of the information provided in the notice published at the initiation of the process.

### 3.2 Public Meetings

BPA offers many different types of public involvement opportunities, including symposiums, town hall meetings, roundtable discussions, workshops, and technical work groups. In addition to these public involvement opportunities, BPA regularly engages directly with its customers; State, local, and tribal governments; public utility commissions; interest groups; and other regional constituents. BPA's engagement activities span multiple venues, including on-site meetings at BPA facilities, off-site meetings at locations near customers or other constituents, as well as mixed options for virtual meetings.

During some Public Involvement Processes, customers or other stakeholders may wish to present their own materials publicly. BPA will facilitate such events when and as appropriate.

To encourage attendance, best practice is to publish notice of a meeting a minimum of 14 calendar days prior to the meeting date whenever practicable and to timely publish notice if the meeting is cancelled. BPA may shorten this notice if additional meetings are necessitated through discussion or the meetings are part of an ongoing series. BPA strives to promote thoughtful engagement by preparing an agenda and developing presentation

materials ahead of the meeting. BPA's best practice is to provide those presentation materials and the agenda three business days prior to the meeting.

### 3.3 Soliciting and Responding to Public Comment

Soliciting and responding to written public comments is an effective way for BPA to involve the public in its work. BPA may solicit Interim Public Feedback or Official Public Comment at any point in a Public Involvement Process. Not every Public Involvement Process will include calls for written feedback or comments. Generally, BPA opens Interim Public Feedback periods as needed during the developmental stages of an initiative and schedules an Official Public Comment period, if one is provided, to close out the Public Involvement Process. BPA may also solicit oral statements during public meetings without providing a corresponding call for written statements.

BPA will preview the opportunities for feedback and comment that it anticipates offering at the start of a Public Involvement Process, but retains the discretion to adjust the process as necessary. BPA will provide parties with clear instructions and deadlines for submitting Interim Public Feedback or Official Public Comment during a Public Involvement Process.

How BPA collects and responds to Interim Public Feedback will vary by process. When BPA requests Interim Public Feedback it will strive to notify: (1) length of comment period with seven calendar days being best practice; (2) if feedback will be published; and (3) whether BPA intends to respond to feedback provided. Following an Interim Public Feedback request, BPA may provide high-level overviews and reactions at a subsequent meeting, respond to parties that submitted feedback individually, share feedback with other process participants, provide additional information or materials publicly, or encourage process participants to submit their feedback again during an Official Public Comment period

If a Public Involvement Process includes an Official Public Comment period, BPA's best practice is to allow 30 calendar days for public comment, while the actual timeframe may vary depending on circumstances. BPA intends to follow the best practice, whenever possible, of addressing the substance of submitted Official Public Comments in the document concluding the process.

### 3.4 Compiling and Retaining Records

During the Public Involvement Process, BPA will have published materials that support the evaluation and discussion of an issue. These materials are a record of the process.

BPA shall maintain records for each public involvement activity based on the applicable record management requirements BPA is required to meet. This includes an evaluation of

which materials remain on bpa.gov, or its successor, after an activity has been completed and how long those records are made available.

## 4 Public Involvement in the Formulation of Major Regional Power Policies

Section 4(g) of the Northwest Power Act directs the BPA Administrator to promote widespread public involvement in the formulation of regional power policies by maintaining a comprehensive program to inform the Pacific Northwest of major regional power issues, obtain public views on those issues, and secure advice and consultation on those issues from its customers and other constituencies. BPA recognizes policies subject to those directives as Major Regional Power Policies.

BPA defines Major Regional Power Policy as a statement of future effect, or substantive revision thereof, that (1) is formulated by the BPA Administrator, (2) establishes the manner in which the BPA Administrator will implement law or conduct business, and (3) the BPA Administrator identifies as involving a major regional power issue pursuant to section 4(g) of the Northwest Power Act. The Public Involvement Process established in this Section 4 of the Public Involvement Policy applies only to the formulation of such Major Regional Power Policies pursuant to section 4(g) of the Northwest Power Act. This policy does not apply to any matter for which law or regulation requires specific public involvement activities, any matter for which BPA has established a specific Public Involvement Process, settlements, rules of procedure, business or organizational practices, or the operational decisions implementing a Major Regional Power Policy.

### 4.1 The Public Involvement Process for the Formulation of Major Regional Power Policies

Prior to publishing notice of intent to formulate a Major Regional Power Policy, the BPA Administrator may consult with customers or other constituencies to obtain their views and secure advice on a particular topic. Pre-Initiation Engagement activities are not subject to the notice requirements outlined below.

#### 4.1.1 Notice of the Policy Formulation Process

If the BPA Administrator elects to formulate a Major Regional Power Policy subject to this public involvement policy, the BPA Administrator will publish a notice to the public with the intent to formulate such policy. In the notice, the BPA Administrator will provide:

1. The subject of the potential policy;

2. Identification of any existing policies that would be replaced or supplemented by the potential policy;
3. Instructions on how to contact BPA with questions regarding the potential policy;
4. The proposed timeline for developing the policy; and
5. The expected output of the initiative.

The BPA Administrator may combine a notice of intent with a notice of public meeting or a notice of proposed policy.

#### 4.1.2 Public Meetings

The BPA Administrator may hold public meetings prior to publication of a proposed policy offered for Official Public Comment. The BPA Administrator will determine the appropriate number, frequency, and format of public meetings and provide, at a minimum, 14 calendar days' notice of such meetings whenever practicable. In the notice, the BPA Administrator will provide:

1. The date, time, and location of the meeting;
2. Instructions for attending the meeting in-person or, if available, virtually; and
3. The agenda for the meeting.

The BPA Administrator may use public meetings to:

1. Provide information regarding the development process or the details of the proposed policy;
2. Facilitate a review of technical data or methodology BPA proposes to rely on;
3. Engage in discussion with attendees regarding issues identified by BPA or by attendees;
4. Respond to questions within the scope of the policy formulation process; or
5. Solicit Interim Public Feedback on particular topics or draft language.

The BPA Administrator may conduct additional public meetings at any time during the Major Regional Power Policy formulation process.

#### 4.1.3 Offering of Proposed Policy for Official Public Comment

If the BPA Administrator intends to propose a Major Regional Power Policy after the activities described in 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, as applicable, the BPA Administrator will publish a notice of the proposed policy. Whenever practicable, the BPA Administrator will allow a minimum of 30 calendar days for interested parties to submit written Official Public Comments in response to a notice of proposed policy. The BPA Administrator may offer supplemental Official Public Comment opportunities of less than 30 calendar days at any time during the Major Regional Power Policy formulation process.

In the notice, the BPA Administrator will provide:

1. The text of the proposed Major Regional Power Policy;
2. Identification of any existing policies that would be replaced or supplemented by the proposed policy;
3. A request for Official Public Comments on the policy and instructions on how to submit them;
4. Any deadlines for receipt of such comments; and
5. Instructions on how to contact BPA with questions regarding the proposed policy.

#### 4.1.4 Publication of Final Policy and Close-Out Document

If the BPA Administrator elects to adopt a Major Regional Power Policy after a proposed policy is offered for Official Public Comment, the BPA Administrator will publish a notice and the text of the final Major Regional Power Policy, accompanied by a close-out document. In the close-out document, the BPA Administrator will include:

1. A description of the policy and its purpose;
2. A summary of the Official Public Comments received;
3. Responses to the Official Public Comments; and
4. A statement adopting the final policy.

The policy will become effective on the date of the publication of the notice unless otherwise specified.

#### 4.2 Expedited Policy Formulation

If the BPA Administrator, for good cause, finds that conducting the Public Involvement Process for the formulation of Major Regional Power Policies as written is impracticable or contrary to the public interest, such process may be modified or bypassed. The BPA Administrator will incorporate such a finding and a brief statement of the reasons for the finding in any adopted policy. In expediting the adoption of a Major Regional Power Policy, the BPA Administrator will endeavor to carry out all practicable public involvement activities. The BPA Administrator may elect to adopt an interim policy under this section and adopt a superseding final policy after conducting the Public Involvement Process as written.

#### 4.3 Combination of Other Required Notices with Policy Notices

The BPA Administrator may combine other notices required by law or regulation with notices required by this process.