

Community-Led Clean Energy Capacity Building and Research Incubation for California Native American Tribes and Community-Based Organizations

INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION

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- Builds tribal and community-based organization (CBO) capacity to identify and address critical community loads, resilience gaps, and outage impacts.
- Enables communities historically underserved to participate meaningfully in DER-based resilience planning, deployment model development, and readiness assessments.
- Ensures DER resilience strategies and deployment reflect community-defined critical loads and DVC outage-burden priorities.
- Prepares communities to take part in DER resilience planning, real-world testing, and implementation efforts.

PROPOSED INITIATIVE BUDGET	\$23M
% OF TOTAL BUDGET (excl. admin & overhead)	3%
# OF RESEARCH TOPIC AREAS	2

ALIGNMENT SUMMARY

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ALIGNMENT

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"Support technology development, innovative deployment models, and real-world testing and evaluation for clean DER strategies that allow critical and essential loads and services to remain powered during outage events and reduce restoration time for vulnerable populations, prioritizing critical resilience needs identified by Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Communities."

This initiative will equip tribes and CBOs to identify, plan for, and deploy community-defined resilience priorities, enabling DER strategy development, testing, and implementation that help keep critical services powered during outages and support faster restoration for vulnerable populations.

CPUC ALIGNMENT

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- Supports CPUC decision-making by increasing tribal and DVC participation in more affordable and equitable resilience, DER, microgrid, and interconnection planning processes.
- Provides community-generated insights, including local resilience priorities, outage challenges, siting constraints, and interconnection considerations.
- Reduces ratepayer costs by improving early engagement and community readiness, helping accelerate deployment and avoid project delays, siting conflicts, and late-stage changes.
- Enhances safety, reliability, and cost-effectiveness of RD&D and pilot projects by strengthening community capacity to evaluate resilience hubs, storage options, and DER integration needs.

California Native American Tribal Energy Capacity Building and Mentorship Incubator

START	2028
OUTPUTS	2029
MARKET READY	2033

Tribes often face staffing shortages, limited technical information, and barriers to participating in clean energy planning, research, and demonstration efforts. They can have difficulty accessing funding, navigating siting and permitting, and engaging in state, federal, and utility energy processes. These gaps make it harder for tribes to identify critical loads, plan for resilience, and take part in DER strategies that can help maintain essential services during outages, among other benefits.

ALIGNMENT SUMMARY

WHAT IS THE DISTINCT RESEARCH APPROACH?	HOW WILL YOU KNOW YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL?	HOW WILL YOU COORDINATE?
- Provides multimodule training, dual mentorship, and technical assistance to build long-term tribal energy governance capacity. (p. 80) - Uses a sovereignty-centered incubator model that prepares tribes for clean energy planning, DER demonstrations, and resilience activities. (p. 81) - Delivers experiential learning and applied training based on tribal microgrid, storage, and DER deployment lessons. (p. 81) - Adapts proven cohort-based innovation cluster models for structured tribal training and mentorship pathways. (p. 81)	- Tribes complete training modules and report improved knowledge and usefulness of the curriculum. (p. 82) - Tribes prepare updated/new energy plans that increase integration of DERs, microgrids, storage, resilience hubs. (p. 83) - Tribes develop project concepts that lead to feasibility checks, partnerships, or participation in demonstration efforts. (p. 82) - Improved tribal ability to plan DER resilience strategies; key metrics include completed training modules, updated energy plans, and new partnerships or pre-application materials demonstrating increased readiness. (p. 82)	- Coordinate with EPIC Administrators to align tribal capacity-building with DERs, microgrid, storage, and building decarbonization research and deployment. (p. 82) - Work with IOU Administrators to help tribes prepare for interconnection, load management, EV-charging readiness, and building electrification planning. (p. 82) - Share training models and microgrid and storage lessons with the Gas R&D program and incorporate related safety and critical-facility resilience research. (p. 81, 82)

CBOs often lack the staffing, technical knowledge, and organizational support needed to evaluate clean energy technologies, participate in research, development, demonstration and deployment activities, and navigate utility and regulatory processes. These gaps limit their ability to identify community resilience needs, assess outage impacts, and participate in DER strategies that support their communities. Without this support, communities have fewer chances to shape projects that improve their energy costs, reliability, and environmental conditions.

START	2028
OUTPUTS	2029
MARKET READY	2033

ALIGNMENT SUMMARY

WHAT IS THE DISTINCT RESEARCH APPROACH?	HOW WILL YOU KNOW YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL?	HOW WILL YOU COORDINATE?
• Provide structured training, dual mentorship, and technical assistance to help CBOs evaluate clean energy technologies and participate in DER resilience planning. (p. 84) • Build CBO capacity through a multiyear incubator supporting community-driven action and engagement in regulatory, planning, and demonstration processes. (p. 85) • Use lessons from EPIC innovation clusters and community demonstrations to deliver cohort-based training, practical tools, and scaling. (p. 85) • Strengthen CBO ability to address community resilience needs and outage challenges. (p. 84)	• CBOs complete training modules that strengthen their clean energy and resilience skills. (p. 86) • CBOs create community-driven project ideas that progress into proposals. (p. 86) • CBOs form new partnerships with utilities, local governments, researchers, and/or community groups. (p. 86) • Improved CBO ability to support DER-related resilience planning • Metrics include completed trainings, number of community-led concepts developed, and new partnerships and collaborations that strengthen local resilience efforts. (p. 86)	• Coordinate with EPIC Administrators to align CBO training with DER integration and community resilience research, using lessons from EPIC innovation clusters and community-scale demonstrations on engagement, outreach, and planning. (p. 85) • Work with EPIC Administrators to support CBO engagement in resilience activities and utility customer programs. (p. 85) • Coordinate with the Gas R&D Program by sharing safety and critical-facility resilience lessons and applying EPIC training models and community-scale demonstration insights to support CBO readiness. (p. 85)