

CONCLUSION



In the 2018 Biennial Energy Report, we explored what it means for Oregon to transition to a low-carbon economy. The final chapter of that report recognized that achieving Oregon’s energy and climate goals while protecting consumers requires partnership and coordination among affected communities, policy makers, state and local governments, businesses, and industry leaders. The 2018 report concluded with recommendations that focused on collaboration – a critical step on which the state has made progress over the past two years. The recommendations called for increased data sharing across state agencies and fostering new relationships between public, private, and community organizations to explore and publish data that better informs stakeholders, decision-makers, and the public.

In drafting the 2020 BER, the Oregon Department of Energy was able to identify and better leverage information and the expertise of our sister agencies and community partners. Collaborative efforts to address the state’s goals – such as the work that the Departments of Transportation, Environmental Quality, Land Conservation and Development, and ODOE are doing to advance the Statewide Transportation Strategy; and the coordination between ODOE and the Building Codes Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services on building codes – have enhanced the state’s informative capacity by strengthening relationships and creating efficiencies.

Another recommendation in 2018 was for energy policies to identify and address their effects on all Oregonians, both in terms of their burdens and benefits. In the 2020 report, ODOE has included more demographic data to better describe and highlight how energy programs and policies contribute (or don’t contribute) to equitable outcomes. As an agency, we recognize that we still have a long way to go before we can tell the whole story, which is why one of the key initiatives in our new agency strategic plan is to improve our ability to collect and analyze demographic and other socio-economic data. Leadership from Governor Kate Brown, especially through her Equity Framework, has encouraged state agencies to design policies with all Oregonians in mind and improve engagement within Oregon communities.

Developing a report in 2020 also meant we needed to reflect on numerous concurrent challenges in our communities – from social unrest to the current effects of climate change to an economic recession and global pandemic. The scope and scale of the events in 2020 has made it more important than ever that we listen and amplify diverse voices. Transition was the theme of the agency’s very first Biennial Energy Plan 45 years ago, and it remains a theme today. We recognize that not only do we need to transition to a decarbonized economy and energy system, but we need to do so in a way that addresses current and historic inequities. Energy decisions cannot be made in a vacuum; the development of energy policy is intersectional work and must be considered with climate, environment, and equity lenses. It will take Oregonians from all backgrounds and experiences to help Oregon’s policy- and decision-makers get this right.

For this reason, the 2020 Biennial Energy Report does not include a specific list of recommendations. Instead, policy briefs include ideas for decarbonizing the transportation, direct fuels, and electricity sectors, and highlight innovative ways that Oregonians are moving toward a clean energy future. Oregon's farmers are investing in energy efficiency projects to save money and reduce emissions. Utilities are using smart meters and distributed resource planning to work with homeowners and business to accelerate grid modernization and increase resilience. The natural gas sector is looking to innovative technologies like renewable natural gas and power-to-gas to reduce emissions. Cleaner transportation options are emerging – not only for individual Oregon drivers but also for fleet managers. And communities around the state are making investments in clean energy projects that also increase opportunities and work in partnership with underserved Oregonians.

Instead of internally-developed recommendations, we propose that Oregonians join us in a conversation about what they want the future of our energy system to look like and how to get there. This report is intended to serve as a starting place for those conversations. We have structured it to be a resource for all Oregonians – those new to energy issues and those already steeped in policy and practice. For those who are new to energy issues, the history timeline provides context and helps readers understand the events that shaped the energy sector in our state. We created a 101 section for people who want to learn more about how the system works and are interested in understanding the background on policy discussions like clean energy standards and resource adequacy. The policy briefs offer additional analysis on the issues in front of policy makers and communities. At a high level, similar themes for recommendation discussions are emerging such as filling data gaps, addressing equity and energy burden, planning for transition, and assessing the need for state engagement and investment.

But in order to develop specific recommendations, we need to work with not only energy industry experts, but also with Tribes, community-based organizations, and especially the Oregonians who disproportionately feel the impacts of our energy choices every day. We want all Oregonians to be able to engage in a conversation about Oregon's energy future, whether they are experts or not. And we hope this report will help.

In 2017, the Oregon Department of Energy, recognizing that the energy sector and ODOE's role in it had changed, led an effort to establish a new Biennial Energy Report.

The Oregon Legislature agreed, passing HB 2343 (ORS 469.059). ODOE published its inaugural biennial report in 2018.

The primary **purpose of the report** is to inform local, state, regional and federal energy policy development, energy planning, and energy investments, and to identify opportunities to further the energy policies of the state. To do this, ODOE, the state's dedicated energy office, **collects critical energy data and information** and analyzes what they mean for Oregon.

The report **framework is built to be an evolving document** that discusses Oregonians' contemporary interests and inquiries about resources, policies, trends, and impacts across the state. The **biennial nature of the report** creates a **central "go-to" document and process** to ensure the report is timely and responsive to a diverse group of stakeholders and the public. Ultimately, the report is meant to **serve as a trusted, data-driven platform to have informed conversations** on the emerging issues and policies in our community, along with goals and strategies for the future.

2020 Development and Engagement Process

As directed by the statute, ODOE "shall seek public input and provide opportunities for public comment during the development of the report." With distribution and continued use of the 2018 report, ODOE recognized that broader and more diverse outreach was needed in subsequent reports. The drafting of the 2020 report also coincided with ODOE's strategic planning effort, which identified new strategic imperatives focused on equity and engagement.

ODOE undertook a deliberate internal planning effort to enhance our engagement efforts. Work plan objectives included:

- Meet statutory requirements while engaging with a wider range and more diverse stakeholders, including those traditionally underrepresented in energy policy discussions or who have perspectives about inequities of energy policies and programs.
- Ensure content is relevant and timely to stakeholder interests and questions.
- Ensure project work is consistent and complementary to other stakeholder engagement approaches and tools at ODOE.
- Create engagement resources and identify input opportunities during ODOE's existing work with stakeholders.
- Facilitate centralized and coordinated outreach activities using various media and customer portal submissions.

Implementation

ODOE heard from more than 100 people through a public survey, website comment portal, and staff discussions, ranging from members of the public to NGOs to energy industry experts. In 2020 and looking forward, key interests and priorities of stakeholders expressed to ODOE included:

- Greater access to clean energy resources and ensuring energy options for diverse communities across Oregon.
- Maintaining reliable and low-cost energy while the state gets closer to 100 percent clean energy.
- Interest in the status of new and emerging energy technologies in Oregon.
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the energy sector.
- Key historical energy decisions that affect energy in Oregon.
- Natural and cultural resources protection when developing new energy resources.

Website Portal

ODOE hosts a public website for the 2020 Biennial Energy Report:

<https://www.oregon.gov/energy/Data-and-Reports/Pages/Biennial-Energy-Report.aspx>. Along with a link to sign up for email updates, ODOE provided an online comment form to receive and review public comments. As part of the scoping process, all comments received through May 2020 were compiled and reviewed by the report development team. The team completed a review and action-assessment to ensure each response was evaluated and included for consideration during the development process.

Survey

ODOE initiated a month-long survey that was promoted on ODOE communication channels and sent out directly to stakeholders. The survey collected approximately 70 responses from the general public, government, elected officials, Tribes, utilities, non-profits, and energy-related fields. Self-reported demographics show that respondents were predominantly white and located along the I-5 and I-84 corridors. In evaluating this data, the BER team discussed establishing a goal to increase and diversify future participation in the BER survey and as part of our agency's strategic plan. Respondents who read the 2018 report found many sections of the report useful, particularly Energy by the Numbers, and recommended improvements to the length/style of the report and topics chosen. For 2020, primary areas of interest included: energy burden and equity, energy efficiency, climate change, renewable energy, resilience, transportation, and the impacts of COVID-19. The steering team for the report at the agency reviewed survey results and conducted an action-assessment to ensure each response was evaluated and considered during the development and drafting process.

Direct Discussion & Equity Consideration

In the course of ODOE's existing work, staff presented and discussed scoping for the Biennial Energy Report with various stakeholder and advisory groups. This included ODOE's Energy Advisory Work Group, utilities, League of Oregon Cities, and the Government-to-Government Natural Resources Work Group. Slides, the website link, and a scoping handout were provided, along with direct follow-up with ODOE's Associate Director of Strategic Engagement & Development.

ODOE staff also completed specific outreach to stakeholders and organizations with an update on the project and list of opportunities to provide comments. Stakeholders provided direct input and ODOE completed more than 20 scoping input webinars to gather specific feedback prior to content development. The scoping input process helped identify where ODOE could address required topics through a data-driven process inclusive of equity considerations. This was an important contribution to the agency's efforts on prioritization and development of topics and priorities.

Once the topic areas were chosen, the internal steering team completed a scoping process to identify the specific objectives, information, and narrative for each topic. Initial scoping prompts included: *Are there equity considerations/discussions that can be included in this scope? Are there opportunities to lift up voices that haven't typically been heard in this space?*

In the drafting process, assignments that address key questions or policy issues included prompts for consideration including: *What challenges or barriers are being identified or addressed? What are the equity considerations for this topic, including opportunities, challenges, and how are these being addressed?*

Incorporation of an equity lens in the scoping and content development process of the report is an important step forward, but not an end point. Many topics or issues were identified but will require more time and exploration, especially with community-based organizations and underserved communities, to fully understand and bring these topics to readers. This has been identified as a lesson learned for the team and a continuous improvement objective for future iterations of the report.

Peer Review and Interagency Collaboration

In preparing this report, ODOE leveraged the knowledge and data of our sister agencies. In particular, the Oregon Department of Transportation shared information on electric vehicle registrations and fuels, Oregon Housing and Community Services and its contractor, TRC, provided county-level data used in the sector profiles and energy burden sections, Northwest Power and Conservation Council's data informed the energy efficiency and resource adequacy sections, and ODOE used Oregon Public Utility Commission data on utilities and Department Environmental Quality data for our energy and climate change analyses. ODOE deeply appreciates the many staff at our sister agencies who took the time to read sections of this report and provide input. OPUC, DEQ, ODOT, NWPCC, OHCS, and the Department of Land Conservation and Development, in particular, responded quickly to requests to review and offered expert feedback and technical assistance. Their contributions improved the quality of this report.

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