



GRIDWORKS

CASE STUDY

COLORADO'S ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION AUTHORITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SETTING THE BAR FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

OVERVIEW

Legislation in Colorado in 2021 created a novel concept to expedite electric transmission development in the state, the Colorado Electric Transmission Authority (CETA). CETA is an independent, political subdivision of the state charged with developing transmission to increase grid reliability, help Colorado meet its clean energy goals, and aid in community and economic development.

To develop this third goal, community and economic development, Gridworks approached CETA in late 2023 with the idea to establish community engagement principles. The impetus was to develop principles to guide engagement between project partners and potential host communities to ensure:

- local community needs are heard in the development process,
- benefits flow to local communities, and
- developers have a clear set of expectations for interacting with local communities.

Discovering few resources and no policies directly related to community engagement and transmission development, Gridworks facilitated the development of a CETA policy.

“Gridworks’ research and literature review was path-breaking, and the community engagement principles are first-of-its-kind. Gridworks’ facilitation and policymaking expertise has prepared CETA well to conduct effective and efficient community engagement when we proceed to develop a transmission project.”

— Maury Galbraith
CETA Executive Director

“I am proud of the CETA Board for proactively setting its expectations for robust and meaningful community engagement, and as a result setting forth a path for electric transmission projects that work for all Coloradans. Gridworks’ expertise and foresight was essential to establishing this crucial foundation, setting a high and achievable bar for how we expect transmission projects developers to interact with local communities.”

— Karl R. Rábago
CETA Board Director



APPROACH

Over the course of nine months in 2024, Gridworks worked closely with the CETA Board of Directors, CETA staff, stakeholders, and local governments to develop [CETA's Principles of Community Engagement](#). The work included research and a literature review, study sessions, expert interviews, several rounds of stakeholder feedback, and outreach to county commissions. The following illustrates the steps for Gridworks' process:



OUTCOMES

With a unanimous vote, the CETA Board approved final principles in October 2024. CETA's principles center on four key themes:

- **Information sharing:** require a transparent, credible, and open process that includes documentation of the process steps, a public information repository, timely project updates to the public, clear project points of contact, and developer disclosure of other infrastructure projects.
- **Communication:** require meaningful engagement with local communities that includes comprehensive engagement plans, pre-application information sessions with communities, private Tribal meetings, adaptable and responsive engagement strategies that seek inclusion and diversity, project design flexibility, a land agent code of conduct, language translation services when needed in communities, and documentation of public input.
- **Community benefits:** advocate for public resources and both financial and non-financial benefits that support local communities, including fair landowner compensation, tangible community benefits, self-determination of benefits by local communities, third party advisory services, and mediation services.
- **Accountability:** require long-term commitments to host communities that include construction stage engagement, restoration commitments post-construction, clear monitoring metrics, a dispute resolution process, and operation stage engagement.

With a transparent, clear policy toward community engagement established, CETA is poised to act on its goal of efficient, productive, and beneficial transmission development that reflects the objectives of CETA.

ABOUT GRIDWORKS

Gridworks facilitates difficult discussions and collaboration between policymakers, decarbonization advocates, energy providers and utility operators. We work with these groups to determine the best approach to meet decarbonization goals. Our work has eased the shift toward clean energy in the Western U.S. We're expanding to further our mission and invite you to work with us to navigate your clean energy challenges.

Learn more at gridworks.org.