

The background of the cover is a photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. Several palm trees are silhouetted against a bright, golden sky. In the distance, dark, hilly mountains are visible. The overall atmosphere is warm and scenic.

20  
23 | Annual  
Report



## Your Local Champion for Equitable Access to Energy Resources

Our mission is to build a stronger clean energy economy and community throughout California's Inland Empire by connecting residents, businesses, and local governments to a wide range of energy efficiency resources. Together, we will empower local governments to practice energy efficiency; support workforce education and training in our region; and enable code compliance in the building industry.



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# 01.

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## Executive Summary

### I-REN Overview

The Inland Regional Energy Network (I-REN) is a consortium of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), San Bernardino Council of Governments (SBCOG), and Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) that serve the counties of Riverside and San Bernardino. These partners initially began collaborating in 2019 with a shared vision to establish locally administered, designed, and delivered energy efficiency (EE) programs.

Historically, the Inland Empire has faced challenges in receiving equitable opportunities to participate in EE and advanced energy. As dedicated representatives of local government, the I-REN consortium members bring established connections from their work serving this region to support filling gaps in existing EE services. The establishment of a Regional Energy Network (REN) in the Inland Empire region offers equitable opportunities for ratepayers in these communities to be engaged and active participants in meeting California's EE goals.

In February 2021, I-REN applied for REN portfolio administrator (PA) status to offer a portfolio of programs serving the Public Sector, Codes & Standards (C&S), and Workforce Education & Training (WE&T), with governance from WRCOG as the administrative lead agency as well as SBCOG and CVAG. I-REN was authorized by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC or Commission) in Decision (D.) 21-11-013 Approval of Inland Regional Energy Network Energy Efficiency Business Plan, which funded I-REN to offer EE services through program year 2027.



## 2023: Expanding I-REN's Reach and Impact

After establishing a solid foundation for portfolio administration and governance in 2022, I-REN moved swiftly in 2023 to approve contracts, onboard consultants, and begin program development and outreach activities in earnest.

Stakeholder engagement, which played a vital role in shaping I-REN's business plan, continued to be a major focus of 2023 activities. I-REN hosted orientations across its expansive territory to introduce the REN and gain insights from local and regional agency staff. Feedback from stakeholders informed I-REN's Organizational Strategic Planning process. Public and private sector building professionals provided survey responses with their needs and priorities for I-REN program designs. I-REN program teams attended and presented at events in partnership with a wide range of organizations, to strengthen existing relationships and foster new connections in the region.

Alongside stakeholder outreach efforts, crucial elements of I-REN's program portfolio were activated to provide quick benefits to the region. I-REN's Building Upgrade Concierge (BUC) was launched, and the public sector program team onboarded 28 agencies to begin receiving services. I-REN hosted its first C&S training in June 2023 and successfully delivered 13 trainings by the end of 2023. Under the WE&T Sector, 11 I-REN jurisdictions received I-REN Energy Fellows at their agencies to support capacity for EE and resiliency projects.

With the launch of program activities in 2023, I-REN also heightened its focus on data collection and program performance tracking. Findings from past evaluations and REN best practices figured prominently in this process. In early 2023, I-REN undertook a process to define its unique value metrics (UVMS) in alignment with its strategic framework. Program teams selected key performance indicators and developed methodologies for tracking program data. Beginning in August 2023, I-REN participated in an Evaluability Assessment as part of the CPUC's evaluation of RENs, receiving high marks from evaluators for its UVMS and preparedness to successfully track program data. In late 2023, I-REN joined the other PAs and stakeholders in beginning to examine and clarify segment indicators and common metrics.

Looking ahead to 2024, I-REN will continue to build on these early achievements and refine program offerings based on stakeholder engagement, to ensure that equity and market support remain at the heart of I-REN operations as its reach and impact expands.

## I-REN Accomplishments

### From Business Plan Approval to Present



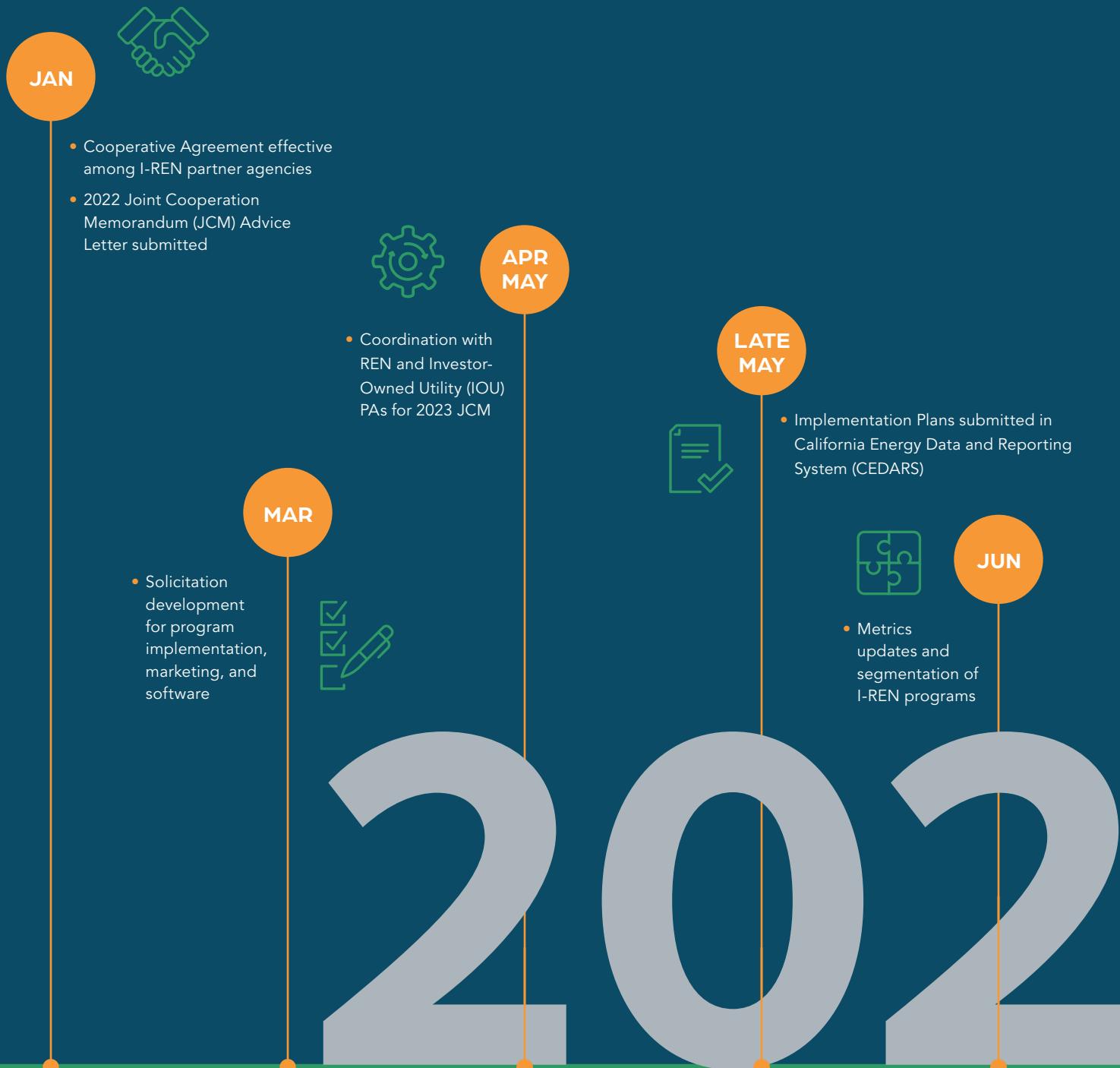
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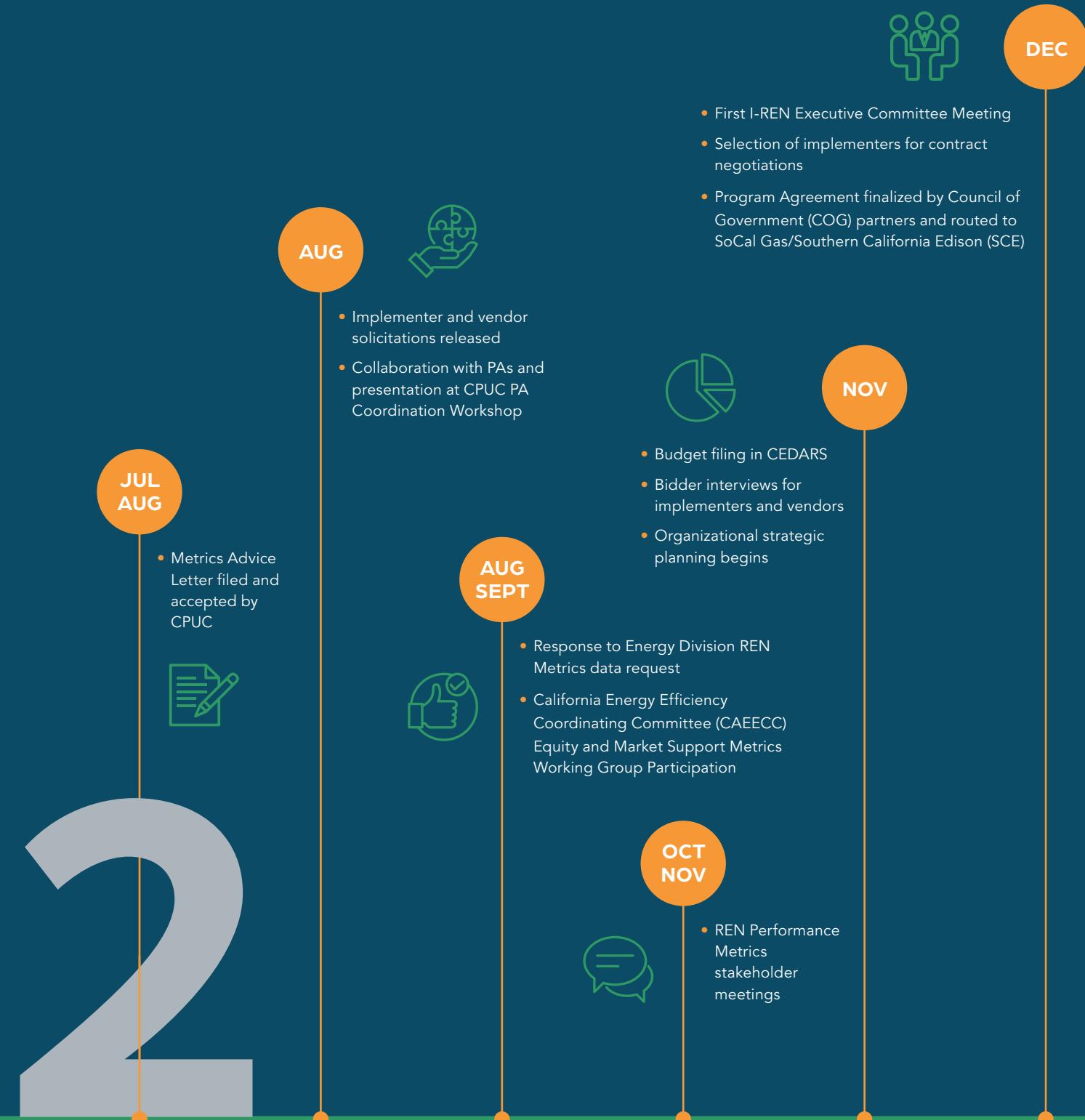


- Business Plan approved in D.21-11-013
- Building I-REN contacts list for local governments, tribes, and other stakeholders
- Began working with SoCalGas on Program Agreement
- Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and I-REN Governance and Operations Rules in development between I-REN partner agencies

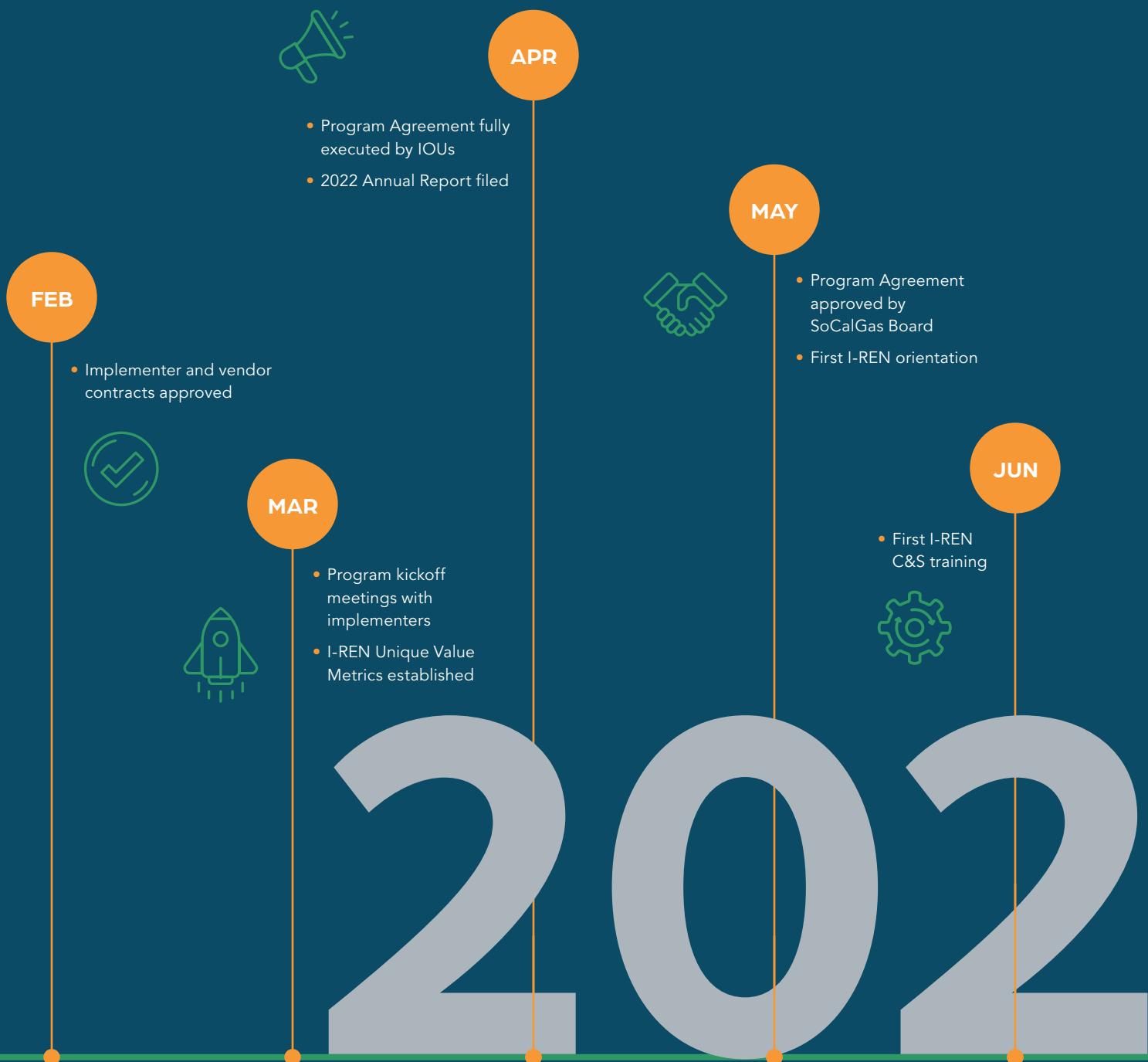
2021

# I-REN Accomplishments





# I-REN Accomplishments





# Organizational Strategic Planning

In 2023, I-REN developed a five-year Organizational Strategic Plan to proceed with the launch and rollout of its programs, to ensure effective and efficient use of CPUC funding, identify clear priorities and actions, and align activities and engagement across REN member agencies. The I-REN Strategic Plan will be used by the internal I-REN team and I-REN Executive Committee and will also serve as a public-facing document to share the direction and focus of I-REN with cities, tribes, and other government partners in the local region.

## STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS



1

### COHESIVE REGION

I-REN operates as a cohesive regional program and will make available and distribute benefits equally throughout the region with a fair allocation of resources and services to the COGs and member agencies.



2

### FIRST TWO YEARS

I-REN will focus on the delivery of positive tangible impacts to the region through a successful rollout and launch of programs.



3

### AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

I-REN will actively engage with all member agencies, special districts, and partners and strive to establish them as active participants.



4

### INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

I-REN will be an effective and efficient organization, characterized by agility, responsiveness, and accountability.

## BASED ON THESE GOALS, I-REN HAS IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING PRIORITIES AND KEY ACTIVITIES.

- **EQUAL BENEFITS REGION-WIDE**

Establish tools and approaches to offer equal benefits for COGs and member agencies.

- **PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND LAUNCH**

Ensure successful launch of programs in the first two years to help build I-REN's momentum.

- **REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

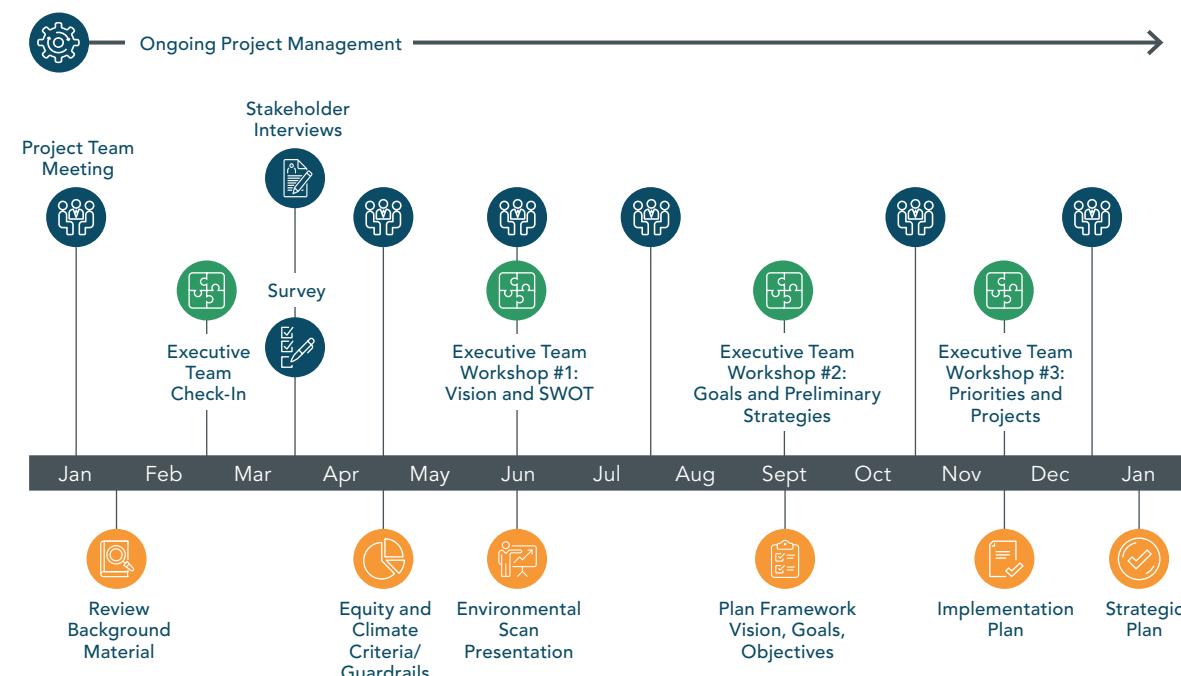
Ensure that the diverse voices of the region are engaged and part of the development of the programs.

- **STRONG AND SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION**

Create the foundation for an effective and responsive organization.

Below is the process that was used in the development of the I-REN Strategic Plan, which included analysis of I-REN best practices and engagement with all the agencies, staff, and I-REN Executive Committee members.

### I-REN Three-to-Five Year Organizational Strategic Plan Process



## *I-REN is unique in its deep relationship with its member agencies in the region.*

These relationships are central to the process and the organization's path to success. To that end, the Strategic Planning effort has reached out to every member agency, as well as other partners, to share information and gather input. Through this outreach, I-REN has identified a clear mission, guiding principles, and central goals to inform the development and operation of the REN. Stakeholder input informs priorities, key activities, targets, and metrics for gauging and managing success, and the process to gather this input has increased awareness for I-REN and its role in the region.

In conjunction with the Strategic Plan, I-REN's internal team worked with the consultant team to create an actionable Implementation Plan that identifies timelines for each action and details the roles and responsibilities of staff members in completing these actions. The Implementation Plan will stand as an internal guide for the coming years to keep I-REN on track and complete the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. I-REN staff and the I-REN Executive Committee are dedicated to implementing this plan over the coming years and tapping the innovation and dynamic character of the region to become a well-established, effective, and impactful organization.

The Strategic Plan was officially approved by the I-REN Executive Committee in January 2024.

## Orientations

I-REN orientations served as comprehensive, introductory meetings on the programs and services available for the three I-REN sectors: Public Sector, WE&T, C&S. The I-REN orientation meetings included presentations about the service offerings as well as a demonstration of the Building Upgrade Concierge (BUC) platform. The orientations also served as interactive meetings to start discussions and develop an understanding for each I-REN member agency's needs.

I-REN Staff have hosted 16 orientations throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties. More than 133 public agency staff members have participated from 41 jurisdictions. In addition, there has been participation from 16 other agencies including the CPUC, chamber of commerce, community college districts, K-12 unified school districts, and water districts.

# I-REN Branding and Website

In 2023, I-REN marketing efforts were dedicated to building a solid foundation. I-REN's marketing team successfully crafted an I-REN brand direction and identity, including a messaging framework, foundational templates, a website, and social media structure. These assets were specifically designed to enhance I-REN's visibility through their website, meetings, outreach, and events, and are intended for collaborative use by stakeholders. The establishment of the I-REN brand involved creating PowerPoint template decks, e-mail signatures and invitations, Word documents, overview flyers, QR code-driven staff identification, web copy, and high-quality visuals. In addition, the I-REN marketing team implemented a reporting and approval process to ensure the continued strength and coherence of the I-REN brand. These components not only represent the essence of the I-REN brand but also ensure consistency and professionalism in all communications.

Having successfully laid a robust foundation for the I-REN brand, the I-REN marketing team implemented the following comprehensive tactics and initiatives to elevate I-REN marketing efforts.



**Your Local Champion for Equitable Access to Energy Resources**

**Who We Are**  
We are a network of partners including the Coachella Valley Association of Governments, San Bernardino Council of Governments, and Western Riverside Council of Governments formed to serve the cities and communities of our region.

**Our Programs**

- Public Sector Program**  
We build a network of knowledge to enable local governments to effectively leverage energy efficiency services and to demonstrate best practices. We take a comprehensive approach in helping local and State agencies undertake energy efficiency projects—from designing performance specifications to project completion—at no additional cost.
- Workforce Education & Training Program**  
We support various workforce and education programs to encourage and realize energy efficiency goals across sectors. We provide training, tools, and opportunities for diverse participants in Disadvantaged Communities to pursue careers and contract opportunities in energy efficiency. This includes deploying up to 27 fellows every year to support public sector agencies with their energy efficiency initiatives within municipal operations and through outreach and engagement within the communities.
- Codes & Standards Program**  
We work closely with local building departments and the building industry to provide training and support to enable long-term streamlining of energy code compliance. We also assist local government agencies in better understanding and enforcing building codes.

Learn more at [iren.gov](http://iren.gov).



**We support local career opportunities in the clean energy economy.**

**Who We Are**  
We are a network of partners including the Coachella Valley Association of Governments, San Bernardino Council of Governments, and Western Riverside Council of Governments formed to serve the cities and communities within Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

**Workforce Education & Training Program**  
Building a brighter energy future requires a highly motivated and skilled workforce throughout the communities we serve. That's why we support various workforce and education programs to realize energy efficiency goals across sectors.

Our comprehensive approach starts with outreach and engagement within our communities to provide no-cost training opportunities for careers in energy efficiency. We also support training providers with the latest information on energy efficiency trends and establish local partnerships, so job seekers have easy access to training tools and resources.

Finally, we foster connections between local companies and workforce development organizations to establish and maintain job pathways. This includes helping job seekers find employment and collaborating with employers to provide continuing education and promote employee retention.

In other words, we're helping people build better futures, for themselves, their communities, and the planet.

Learn more at [iren.gov](http://iren.gov).

## MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

The team crafted a pivotal messaging framework, recognizing its crucial role as a structured tool for key messages. This strategic approach ensured unified communication, reinforced I-REN brand identity, shaped foundational elements for essential marketing, and played a vital role in precisely defining distinct target markets.

<b>Primary Narrative</b>	<b>Your Local Champion for Equitable Access to Energy Resources</b> We prioritize bringing energy efficiency resources to the Inland Empire Region. I-REN increases local control and access to the savings and other benefits of energy efficiency in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. We champion communities to participate in the state's clean energy initiatives by empowering local governments to practice energy efficiency, enabling code compliance in the building industry, and supporting workforce education and training.		
<b>Primary Message Components</b>	<b>PEOPLE-FOCUSED</b>  <b>Community Empowerment</b> Our programs uplift communities by providing opportunities to shape their energy future.	<b>FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE</b>  <b>Energy Efficiency</b> We deliver both energy efficiency and financial savings, while supporting the local economy.	<b>ACTION-ORIENTED</b>  <b>Trusted Facilitator</b> We provide expert resources to enable equitable access to energy solutions.
<b>Support Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver equitable access to workforce and job training resources in energy efficiency across a variety of sectors throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties.</li> <li>Empower communities through expertise and readily available resources, so they can make informed energy efficiency decisions for themselves.</li> <li>Partner with 54 local governments, creating energy efficiency internships and charting a pathway to future employment.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide nearly \$10M per year in energy efficiency programs.</li> <li>Generate additional value by releasing trapped budget line items.</li> <li>Work with local governments to leverage financial mechanisms to deliver energy efficiency projects in public buildings.</li> <li>Provide project management resources for local government energy efficiency projects.</li> <li>Train today's workforce and student candidates while building the local workforce for the new energy efficiency sector and a pathway to better salaried careers.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local building departments and industry stakeholders to enable long-term development of energy code compliance.</li> <li>Provide subject matter experts who can advise on a variety of energy and resource issues.</li> <li>Network local governments with their key contacts, employee candidates, and policy advisers.</li> <li>Provide expert advice on preparing for future state mandates and understanding code requirements.</li> </ul>		

## BRAND GUIDELINES

Developing brand guidelines was crucial as it established a comprehensive framework, providing clear and consistent guidelines for visual and messaging elements. This ensured brand cohesion, recognition, and a unified brand experience across diverse channels.



### Primary Colors

01 Verde

02 Poppy

### Secondary Colors

03 Navy blue

04 Deep gray

05 White

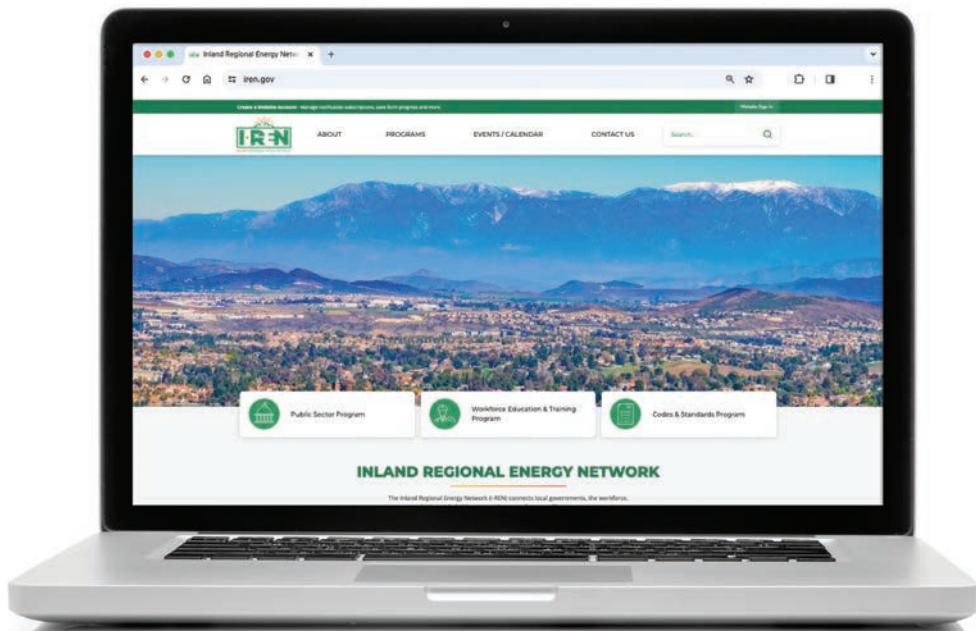
## WEBSITE LAYOUT AND CONTENT

The I-REN website ([iren.gov](http://iren.gov)) was crafted in collaboration with CivicPlus, incorporating essential elements like written content, icons, color schemes, and photographic direction. This approach ensured that the I-REN online presence stayed current, visually appealing, and consistent, highlighting the significance of a well-maintained website in reinforcing the I-REN brand identity and engaging the audience effectively.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Throughout 2023, the marketing team established the foundation for I-REN's presence on social media by creating the brand's official social media profiles with new accounts and social media handles. Additionally, the marketing team crafted comprehensive social media guidelines that will serve as the blueprint for all future I-REN-wide and implementer posts.

Looking ahead, the I-REN marketing team's commitment is to fortify and expand upon this solid foundation and build the profile and engagement of the I-REN brand and presence.





## Public Sector Summary

I-REN's public sector programs are here to help public agencies complete EE projects.

From project identification to completion, I-REN offers a comprehensive suite of no-cost services. I-REN helps identify energy-saving measures and then works alongside agency staff to fund and install them.

As I-REN ramped up in 2023, the public sector programs focused on introducing member public agencies to their services. I-REN conducted orientations throughout the region and 28 individual onboarding meetings with public agencies. I-REN began strategic energy planning efforts and helped to identify new energy projects. They also helped member agencies to benchmark energy performance for 25 facilities and conducted two facility energy audits.

The programs also focused on creating tools, templates, and other program elements, including designing an incentive structure based on member agency feedback and developing an Energy Resilience Roadmap to help agencies plan for their near-, mid-, and long-term energy future. In 2024, the programs will focus on expanding their reach by onboarding new member agencies and expanding on agencies' energy planning and project development efforts that were started in 2023.



## Codes & Standards Summary

C&S offerings consist of non-resource programs to establish and implement training and education for Building Department staff and the building industry within the I-REN territory to support, understand, and effectively implement EE codes and standards.

The target audience includes:

- **PUBLIC SECTOR:** building inspectors, chief building officials, permit technicians, plan examiners, planners, and sustainability directors or managers
- **PRIVATE SECTOR:** architects, contractors, designers, developers, energy consultants, or other non-jurisdictional building professionals

I-REN's locally focused interventions equip Building Department staff to identify potential issues, provide guidance to permit applicants, and streamline the permitting process. With increased knowledge and capacity, local Building Department staff will have the tools and additional resources to support their energy code enforcement and compliance, as well as cultivate the associated energy savings from efficient building practices. The C&S offerings include two core programs: the **Training & Education Program**, which provides training, and the **Technical Support Program**, which provides technical assistance tools and resources.

In 2023, efforts focused on familiarizing the I-REN brand, fostering relationships, garnering interest in developed offerings, and developing a base audience to continue reengaging as C&S activities grow. Broadly, strategies included:

- **LEVERAGING** I-REN's extensive network of connections with public and private stakeholders
- **DISTRIBUTING** materials and messaging to partner entities and permit counters
- **DEVELOPING** a website landing page as a one-stop shop for C&S resources

Specific achievements, outcomes, and opportunities are detailed under "2023 Achievements and 2024 Plans."

Enforcing energy codes has traditionally posed challenges for local jurisdictions, especially smaller communities lacking sufficient resources. Within I-REN's service territory, numerous Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) encounter significant hurdles in upholding energy codes and standards due to limited resources and capacity.

With initial data collected through 2023 activities, I-REN can better pinpoint prospects for involvement within census tracts characterized by elevated levels of low-income households, limited educational achievements, and significant unemployment rates.

In Riverside and San Bernardino counties, there is a combined count of more than 140 census tracts offering potential for community engagement, along with more than 400 contacts strategically positioned to support I-REN's outreach efforts aimed at reaching building industry professionals within disadvantaged and hard-to-reach areas (HTR).

**140+**

Census tracts offering potential for community engagement

**400+**

Contacts strategically positioned to support I-REN's outreach efforts



## Workforce Education & Training Summary

I-REN's WE&T sector offerings consist of non-resource programs with the goal to ensure that there is a trained workforce to support and realize EE savings goals across sectors.

The WE&T sector is split into two core services: a **Training & Education Program** that will assess the marketplace and enhance and deploy training content tailored to the unique I-REN territory. Then there is the **Workforce Development Program** that will highlight EE, green jobs, and bridge the gap connecting job seekers with employers.

*In 2023, I-REN launched the I-REN Energy Fellowship.*



The fellowship placed 11 college graduates and job seekers, with a minimum of an associate degree, at I-REN member agencies to support implementation of important energy initiatives. I-REN is partnering with CivicWell's CivicSpark program to deliver the I-REN Energy Fellowship. Through this program, the 11-month Energy Fellows will support in filling gaps and providing much-needed capacity to implement EE and climate action plan activities within their member agency's jurisdiction and the I-REN territory. I-REN remains committed to identifying the most effective and accessible ways to increase the number of skilled EE workers; especially those within underserved, HTR, tribal, and disadvantaged communities (DACs). In many cases, the I-REN Energy Fellows are either supporting the HTR or DAC communities within I-REN service territory or come from and/or reside in those communities.

In 2023, I-REN explored bringing on a subject matter expert to conduct an energy-focused workforce assessment within the I-REN territory. This workforce assessment will identify the energy workforce resources and their jurisdictional scopes that currently exist within Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Given the large geographic area of the area, this assessment will also include a gap analysis of the resources and provide recommendations on the design, development, and deployment of future I-REN WE&T programs. This assessment will be completed in 2024.



Social Media Post



2023 Fellows



# 02.

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# 2023 Achievements and 2024 Plans

## Introduction

2023 saw the launch of key I-REN program elements to begin delivering value to Inland Empire communities, building on the foundation established in 2022.

I-REN's EE program portfolio consists of six programs in three sectors: public sector, C&S, and WE&T. The primary purpose of I-REN's public sector programs is equity—to improve access to EE for HTR, underserved communities, and DACs in advancement of the Commission's Environmental and Social Justice (ESJ) Action Plan<sup>1</sup> and to provide corollary benefits such as increased comfort and safety, improved indoor air quality, and more affordable utility bills, consistent with Goals 1, 2, and 5 in the ESJ Action Plan. One of I-REN's equity segment programs is a resource program that will deliver savings via projects in public sector facilities.

The primary purpose of I-REN's WE&T programs is to provide market support to contribute to the long-term success of the EE market by educating customers, training contractors, and building partnerships. C&S programs are considered separately from other segments, as directed in D.21-05-031.<sup>2</sup> I-REN's C&S programs are focused around training, outreach, and technical assistance to support private and public sector building professionals in understanding and complying with building energy codes.

I-REN's programs and 2023 activities are detailed in the pages that follow, along with a look ahead to I-REN opportunities in 2024 and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/esjactionplan/>

<sup>2</sup> D.21-05-031 at 16.

# I-REN Programs



## Public Sector

Technical Assistance  
and Strategic Energy  
Planning Program

Normalized Metered  
Energy Consumption  
Program

## Codes & Standards

Training and  
Education Program

Technical  
Support Program



## Workforce Education & Training

Training and  
Education Program

Workforce Development  
Program



## Public Sector

I-REN's public sector programs deliver customized technical assistance and provide monetary incentives for energy projects at publicly-owned facilities in the I-REN service territory.

Through these programs, I-REN aims to increase EE and resiliency within the region. Public sector services include energy use evaluation, facility benchmarking, and targeted project development in line with regional climate and/or energy action plans. Eligible public agencies include:

- Cities and townships
- Counties
- Tribes
- K-12 school districts
- Special districts
- Water and wastewater agencies/districts
- Higher education institutions
- Other public agencies

In 2023, I-REN launched two public sector programs: the Technical Assistance and Strategic Energy Planning Program (TA Program) and the Public Buildings Normalized Metered Energy Consumption Program (NMEC Program). I-REN agencies can access offerings from both programs simultaneously to maximize energy and resilience outcomes while minimizing their out-of-pocket project costs.

I-REN is focused on increased performance within existing buildings. The Inland Empire is one of the hottest regions within California, and a significant portion of the population is considered underserved per the CPUC.<sup>3</sup> Existing public spaces, such as community centers and libraries,

**27,263**  
Square miles

**11%**  
of California's population

**3**  
COGs

**2**  
Counties

**52**  
Cities

**13**  
Tribal nations

**215**  
Special districts

<sup>3</sup> Pub. Util. Code Section 1601(e)

commonly provide refuge for vulnerable community members facing hardship due to extreme climate or economic impacts. By supporting resilience and clean energy, I-REN agencies can: (1) ensure traditionally underserved residents have safe and comfortable spaces, (2) use their experiences with I-REN to empower other local jurisdictions to take action and positively influence current and future programs, and (3) emerge as EE leaders regionally and at the state level.

## IREN-PUBL-001: Technical Assistance and Strategic Energy Planning Program

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I-REN's TA Program offers energy planning and project development support throughout the lifecycle of EE projects. The program reduces the confusion and administrative burden of public sector EE projects, such as funding/financing and reporting requirements, by delivering no-cost services tailored to each agency's unique goals and needs.

This program offers several energy data collection and analysis services to equip agencies to make informed decisions about their energy future. For example, it offers facility benchmarking in I-REN's Building Upgrade Concierge (BUC) software and strategic energy and resilience planning through customized Energy Resilience Roadmaps.

Participating agencies receive a high level of technical and financial assistance to complete EE projects. After determining an agency's energy and resilience goals, I-REN helps agencies identify EE projects and secure funding and financing to implement them. The program then guides agencies through applicable energy programs (including I-REN offerings and those of other PAs), helping build capacity and easing the administrative burden of participating in energy programs. I-REN helps agencies to use whatever financing mechanisms are available to them for their energy upgrade projects, including through other PAs and non-ratepayer funded offerings (e.g., IOU financing, third-party program incentives, grants).

The TA Program has the following objectives:

- **PROVIDE** local governments with support and resources to develop and implement their strategic energy plans and EE projects.
- **HELP** local governments to afford and finance a range of EE upgrades.
- **ESTABLISH** one-on-one support for local governments' EE projects.

- **DEVELOP** or enhance strategic energy plans to connect local government goals related to climate, resilience, and economic development to EE programs and adoption.
- **CREATE** resources for the public sector to tap into EE and distributed energy resources programs offered by other providers, including IOUs.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

In 2023, the public sector programs focused on creating tools and templates for effective service delivery, integrating member agency feedback collected through the I-REN orientation meetings, and onboarding agencies looking for immediate support. I-REN incorporated agency feedback into all program policies and other elements of their program designs to ensure they serve I-REN member agencies' needs equitably. I-REN also began coordinating with other PAs to ensure effective coordination of program services and to maximize support for member agencies. Collecting stakeholder feedback and ramping up the program required significant effort, but it laid the groundwork for full program services in 2024.

The I-REN team created numerous outreach and engagement resources to clearly articulate I-REN program services to public agencies. For example, the high-level overview of public sector programs and services breaks down the project life cycle into easy-to-digest phases.

### External-Facing Slide Providing an Overview of Public Sector EE Support Services

INLAND REGIONAL ENERGY NETWORK



### Energy Efficiency Project Support for Public Agencies

The Inland Regional Energy Network (I-REN) is committed to helping public agencies identify and complete energy efficiency upgrades. We'll support you through each phase of your project.

**1. Project Identification**

Your I-REN team will:

- Collect data from utilities, facilities, or equipment
- Develop portfolio-level deliverables to help you prioritize potential projects that meet your goals, such as energy savings or community resilience

**2. Energy Audit and Funding/Financing Application**

Your I-REN team will:

- Visit your project site to identify opportunities for energy efficiency
- Select viable energy efficiency measures and eligible funding and financing strategies
- Help complete funding and financing applications

**3. Project Approval and Procurement**

Your I-REN team will:

- Help identify and align procurement methods and timelines with applicable program requirements
- Provide technical specifications for procurement needs
- Help develop materials for council agenda package (and attend council meetings as needed)

**4. Construction**

Your I-REN team will:

- Review construction schedule, pre-construction submittals, and scope changes to ensure continued incentive/financing eligibility
- Participate in construction kick-off or recurring meetings (as needed)

**5. Project Closeout**

Your I-REN team will:

- Help collect project closeout records
- Prepare and submit final paperwork for funding and financing application(s)
- Confirm you receive your funding or financing distribution
- Broadcast your success to the community (case study, check presentation, video, social media, etc.)



WRCOG



sb cog



CVAG

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments and San Bernardino Council of Governments have partnered with the Western Riverside Council of Governments to develop I-REN to serve the cities and communities of our region.

## ONBOARDING AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

I-REN's onboarding experts led coordination efforts with COG leadership, representing the I-REN Project Team together. Twenty-eight agencies completed onboarding in 2023, and numerous agencies are now developing projects. I-REN's onboarding team members expertly explain program benefits, building relationships, and identifying agencies' program service needs.

### *Public Sector Program Services Ramp-Up*

16	28	11
Internal deliverables developed	Onboarding meetings held	Facility data templates received
14	2	37
External deliverables developed	Site visits performed	Utility energy data requests initiated
17	2	34
Orientations delivered	Audits in progress	Utility energy datasets received

I-REN completed its first two site visits in October of 2023 for the City of Redlands and San Bernardino County Transportation Authority/SBCOG. Each agency will receive high-level overviews of identified measures in early 2024 and will subsequently complete energy projects for their selected EE measures.

### *City of Redlands Joslyn Senior Center Audit*

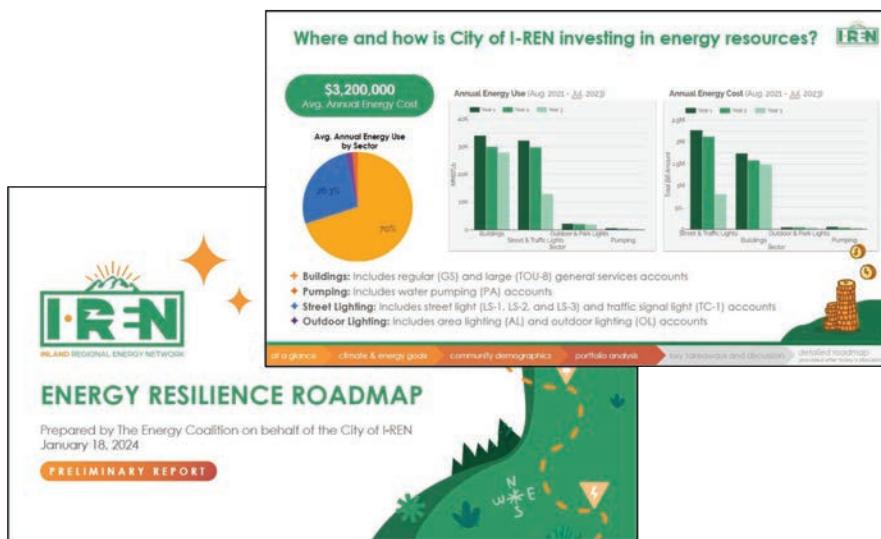


## STRATEGIC ENERGY PLANNING

### Energy Resilience Roadmap

I-REN has developed an innovative report, the Energy Resilience Roadmap, to help agencies improve their EE and climate resilience.

#### Sample Energy Resilience Roadmap Highlight



2023 Energy Resilience Roadmap Development

11

Roadmaps in Queue

2

Roadmaps Drafted

The preliminary report examines an agency's climate plans, energy goals, community vulnerabilities, and energy performance across its portfolio. It identifies energy-intensive buildings and pumping sites for potential resilience upgrades. I-REN collaborates with the agency to understand priorities and critical facility needs. Then, a full roadmap offers tailored recommendations for facilities, suggesting EE improvements and technologies like solar, battery storage, and electric vehicle infrastructure. This two-phased approach allows I-REN to fully customize each agency's report to their unique energy consumption patterns and community needs.

The Energy Resilience Roadmap concludes with practical next steps to seamlessly incorporate recommendations into current and future energy plans, ensuring that agencies are well-prepared to enhance overall energy resilience. The Energy Resilience Roadmap deliverable template was approved in late 2023. Eleven agencies are queued up to receive a roadmap in 2024, with two drafts already completed and under review.

## Energy Benchmarking

I-REN helps agencies to add their building portfolio to ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® (ESPM), an online management tool created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that allows building owners and facility managers to track and assess energy use. I-REN ESPM benchmarking services include creating new portfolios or updating existing portfolios with facility characteristics like square footage and year built, as well as automating the upload of monthly energy consumption from on-site utility meters. I-REN helps agencies determine if their facilities require California Assembly Bill (AB) 802 compliance, and guides agencies that meet the requirements through the submittal process.

### 2023 Energy Benchmarking Facility Support

New ESPM Portfolio Development	9	Facilities in progress
Existing ESPM Portfolio Refresh	4	Facilities in progress
AB 802 Compliance Support	25	Facilities completed

## Building Upgrade Concierge (BUC) Software

Development of the BUC web-based tool officially kicked off in March 2023. The tool offers analytics, modeling, and measurement and verification performance features for public agency benchmarking and project development. Prior to developing this software solution, I-REN conducted a discovery process over several meetings to fully review their EE portfolio, in particular the Public Sector programs and activities, and current information technology assets for EE program delivery (e.g., the website, reporting templates). After reviewing business requirements for the proposed solution, I-REN created functional specifications. The BUC beta version was available for I-REN member testing in April 2023, and functional specifications were approved in May 2023, when the BUC live production site was released. The I-REN team developed a user guide for BUC's analytics modules to make the tool easier to use.

I-REN began introducing the BUC tool to local governments, special districts, and tribal communities during orientation meetings, which began in May 2023. Orientation attendees received a high-level overview of BUC's features, including portfolio management configuration

and dashboard, billing history upload, benchmarking, utility bill analysis charts, and measure savings. I-REN worked with individual local governments to obtain building utility data, which was uploaded into the BUC platform within the agency's respective building portfolio.

#### 2023 BUC Portfolio Development



## OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, I-REN aims to engage all member agencies in the region and will continue orientation delivery and onboarding activities. I-REN also plans to expand benchmarking deliverables in 2024 by delivering Energy Resilience Roadmaps, benchmarking support through ESPM and BUC, and a video training series on ESPM benchmarking. As more agencies join I-REN and obtain their utility data, I-REN can identify opportunities and support full energy project delivery in 2024.

I-REN will help agencies secure external funding and financing, such as Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) and deliver site visits and associated project development services. In 2024, the public sector aims to deliver its first Initial Measures Lists (IML), which outlines high-level EE measure opportunities at targeted facilities and guide agencies through the steps to ensure successful project implementation.

After the completion of all I-REN orientations, I-REN will collate feedback for potential updates to the BUC tool. To assist local governments with the adoption of the BUC tool, I-REN will create training videos for the tool's key features: BUC Dashboard, Analytics Charts, Analytics Report, and Opportunity Register. As more users interact and engage with the BUC tool, I-REN will continually evaluate how BUC should evolve to maximize its benefits to the local governments, special districts, and tribal communities it serves. For example, utilizing building analytics and measuring opportunities presented in a report template can help agencies make informed decisions on EE project implementation.

I-REN will also continue to engage with other PAs and third-party programs to ensure effective coordination of program services and to maximize support for its member agencies. The TA program will focus on developing a communications strategy and social media plan for the remaining program years.

## INTEGRATED DEMAND SIDE MANAGEMENT

D.23-06-055 allows PAs to set aside up to 2.5 percent or \$4 million of their EE budgets to provide an operational complement for integrated demand side management (IDSM) in program years 2024–2027. I-REN will utilize these funds to provide a distributed energy resources (DER) component to audits to identify resilience opportunities, such as renewable energy, battery storage, and microgrids, for agencies. I-REN will carve out resources to conduct 100 DER audits over the next four years, offering agencies technical assistance to further achieve their resilience and climate goals.

## IREN-PUBL-002: Public Buildings Normalized Metered Energy Consumption Program

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I-REN's Public Buildings Normalized Metered Energy Consumption (NMEC) Program provides technical support such as eligibility screening and measurement and verification (M&V), and incentives for meter-based energy savings. The program uses an NMEC approach to measure energy savings at the meter, incentivizing savings that have historically been excluded from EE programs or from technologies that are considered industry standard practice. The program places a special focus on whole-building improvements to community-serving buildings by offering enhanced incentives for deep energy savings at critical facilities, cooling centers, and resilience centers.

The NMEC Program has the following objectives:

- **SUPPORT** comprehensive lighting and whole-building projects to improve the comfort and safety of vulnerable populations. The program will focus on critical facilities and emergency or cooling centers.
- **DELIVER** deep energy savings to public agencies at high visibility locations, positioning local governments as EE leaders within their communities and helping to meet local and state EE and greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- **PROVIDE** technical expertise and training to facility personnel to maximize the persistence of energy and bill savings. The program will deliver savings reports to public agencies to monitor and communicate post-project energy usage.

Using an NMEC approach to calculate energy savings will protect agencies from a mismatch between forecasted and actual savings. Combined with technical assistance and reinforcement of operations and management best practices, public agencies will experience maximized savings for their communities.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

In 2023, the NMEC program focused on designing a program reflective of I-REN member agency values. I-REN integrated member agency feedback collected through the orientations throughout the region into the program's incentive structure design. Based on member agency priorities, the NMEC Program will offer enhanced incentives for deep energy savings at critical facilities. The program will use a tiered incentive structure based on the percentage of a facility's energy use that will be saved through the project—the higher percentage of energy saved, the higher the incentive rate. The program will offer further incentive "kickers" for projects at critical emergency operation and cooling centers.

The NMEC program also focused on designing and developing tools and templates for effective program delivery.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024 AND BEYOND

With a successful design and launch phase in 2023, the NMEC Program will focus on developing projects and offering incentives in 2024. The program will build a robust pipeline of NMEC-eligible projects and approve the first I-REN NMEC project incentive application(s). I-REN will work with local governments to obtain monthly utility data after EE project implementation and will use the BUC tool to track realized energy savings from completed projects. Local governments will be able to view their building portfolio dashboard, identify projects that are not meeting energy savings projections, and adjust any EE upgrades accordingly. The I-REN Public Sector team will use BUC to provide reports and supporting data to the third-party evaluation, measurement, and verification (EM&V) contractor for the NMEC program. BUC will be the main resource for NMEC project and data tracking.

As the program ramps up, I-REN will identify opportunities to streamline and improve their support to I-REN agencies. With I-REN's support, agencies will be able to fund projects that will improve their facilities and increase energy and cost savings.



## Codes & Standards

I-REN's service territory includes many authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) that face significant challenges in enforcing energy codes and standards with their current resources and capacity.

These jurisdictions are small in population size, geographically dispersed, challenged by extreme climate conditions, and disadvantaged by pollution and other factors. I-REN has significant opportunity to support compliance and enforcement, to ensure building department knowledge, awareness, and realization of energy-savings measures.

As an organization led by and dedicated to serving local governments, I-REN provides flexible and adaptable solutions to help bridge the gap and assist local jurisdictions. I-REN's C&S initiatives offer locally focused training, education, and tools to support C&S implementation, gap filling, energy code enforcement, and compliance activities. Training and educational resources are informed by and targeted specifically to address the needs of jurisdictions in the region. To ensure statewide consistency in compliance improvement support, I-REN coordinates and collaborates with the statewide C&S team and meets with the California Energy Commission (CEC) on a quarterly basis.

### IREN-CS-001: C&S Training and Education Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I-REN's C&S Training and Education Program delivers trainings tailored to the needs of local AHJs and the building industry to support, understand, and effectively implement EE codes and standards. The program includes outreach to engage, educate, and involve regional construction firms and building departments, and support compliance and enforcement within regional EE programs and customers. Local, in-person training opportunities will be expanded in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. I-REN C&S trainings are differentiated by topic, with trainings tailored to the region's climate zones and the needs of the region's local jurisdictions, building department staff, and building professionals.

I-REN brings existing relationships with training partners in the region, such as colleges, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), trade

organizations, and regional entities. These relationships are important for connecting with HTR, DAC, underserved, tribal, and ESJ communities. Outreach for this program consists of promoting training through I-REN governing agencies' existing communication channels, through local government partnerships, and through building industry communication networks. I-REN is collaborating with local governments to design and deliver effective messaging during code transitions.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

### The C&S Market Assessment Survey Training and Education Focus

In 2023 the I-REN C&S team conducted a five-month long effort to survey the current state of energy code compliance in the region, gain an understanding of knowledge gaps, and identify stakeholders' preferred delivery options for C&S program offerings. Seventy-seven building professionals in both the public sector (such as AHJ employees) and the private sector (such as contractors) were surveyed. Public versus private sector responses were compared, as well as the difference in responses from Riverside County versus San Bernardino County.

Data captured:

- Job title and location of respondents
- Preferred Energy Code resources
- Most desired training topics and ideal training dates, times, lengths, and settings
- Interest in reach codes by jurisdiction (public sector)
- Barriers to Energy Code compliance
- Most complex components of the Energy Code
- Languages spoken
- Preferred means of accessing Energy Code expertise

*The team  
surveyed  
77  
building  
professionals  
in both the  
public and  
private  
sectors.*

For trainings, respondents prefer morning (10 a.m.–12 p.m.) and early morning (before 10 a.m.). The public sector preferred Tuesdays and Thursdays with 60- to 90-minute trainings, while the private sector preferred Thursdays and Fridays.

Results such as the below informed outreach, training, and engagement activities planned for 2024.

*C&S Market Assessment Survey – Training Topic Requests*



**PUBLIC SECTOR** Energy Code Navigation, Compliance Documentation, Lighting Measures, SolarAPP+, Mechanical Measures

**PRIVATE SECTOR** Energy Code Navigation, Compliance Documentation, Heat Pumps, Plans and Specifications, Quality Insulation Installation

## Launched Training Program

I-REN launched energy C&S education trainings in June 2023 and held thirteen unique offerings through the end of the year, leveraging CEC collaborators, statewide contractor-facing EE programs, and codes entities to cross-promote. Training topics ranged from 2022 energy code changes to compliance, load calculation, SolarAPP+, and design topics.

Successes include:

- I-REN held 13 trainings in total.
- There were 64 net individual attendees, and 27 people attended at least two trainings. Some repeat attendees were present at up to six of the 13 trainings held.
- 12 trainings offered International Code Council (ICC) Continuing Education Credits (CEUs), and a total of 81 CEU certificates were given out (to receive an ICC certificate, a person must attend the training for 60 minutes or longer).
- 75% of attendees who participated in CEU-eligible classes earned a certification.
- 37 jurisdictions and nine private sector building entities were supported through trainings.
- I-REN C&S trainings earned a 99% satisfaction rating from participants. Across all 13 trainings, 54% of participants strongly agreed that the trainings fulfilled 10 different measured metrics of satisfaction, such as training content being applicable to their jobs, easy to follow and understand, and increasing their energy code knowledge. An additional 45% agreed across all 10 training questions.
- Heat Pump Water Heaters for Building Departments was the highest-rated training, with 95% of respondents strongly agreeing that it met all 10 evaluated satisfaction metrics.

13

Trainings

64

Attendees

81

CEU certificates given out

37

Jurisdictions supported

9

Private sector building entities supported

99%

Satisfaction rating

## Educational Webinar on SolarAPP+ Permitting Software

In collaboration with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the City of Menifee as a speaker, I-REN drew its highest training attendance of the year, 26 attendees, in this webinar tailored specifically for Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Menifee is a local example of a jurisdiction that started using SolarAPP+. The training also promoted the CEC's CalAPP grant funding opportunity.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, the C&S training program plans to present a set of twelve trainings at the pace of one training per month, as well as two forums. The 2023 Market Assessment Survey identified training topics most desired by both public and private sector respondents in the I-REN region, including energy code navigation, compliance documentation, and basic building science. 2024 training topics are designed with this in mind. Three trainings will be repeated from 2023, heat pump water heaters; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) load calculations and duct design; and basics of the Energy Code.

A key goal for the I-REN C&S training program in 2024 is to increase the overall number of participants and number of unique jurisdictions and private entities served through this channel. The Market Assessment Survey highlighted the main ways that building professionals in the region keep up to date on energy code training opportunities. Consequently, I-REN's C&S team plans to offer a new training in Spanish, expand its social media presence, develop relationships with other energy organizations that can feature I-REN training opportunities in their newsletters, work with the local ICC chapter in the I-REN region, and cross-promote with other organizations.

## IREN-CS-002: C&S Technical Support Program

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I-REN's C&S Technical Support Program is a non-resource program to develop technical assistance tools and resources to assist building departments and the building industry with understanding, evaluating, and permitting the energy codes to support improved enforcement and compliance. The Technical Support program offers a range of services informed by I-REN-developed survey instruments that gather data on ways that I-REN can assist building departments and industry professionals. Services include:

- **CODES ASSISTANCE**

Provide localized support to building departments in implementing the Energy Code.

- **REACH CODES**

Develop regionally appropriate model ordinances, vet and refine them with participating local governments, provide ongoing technical assistance for implementation, and deliver updates to reflect the triennial code cycle.

- **TRAINING & EDUCATION**

Deliver localized training, in coordination with Training & Education Program. Training partners will include colleges, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, trade organizations, and other regional entities.

- **GRANT SUPPORT**

Monitor and support grant opportunities for building departments.

Although Training & Education was the primary focus for the C&S offerings in 2023, the Technical Support Program completed initial research and outreach efforts to lay the groundwork for a more robust 2024.

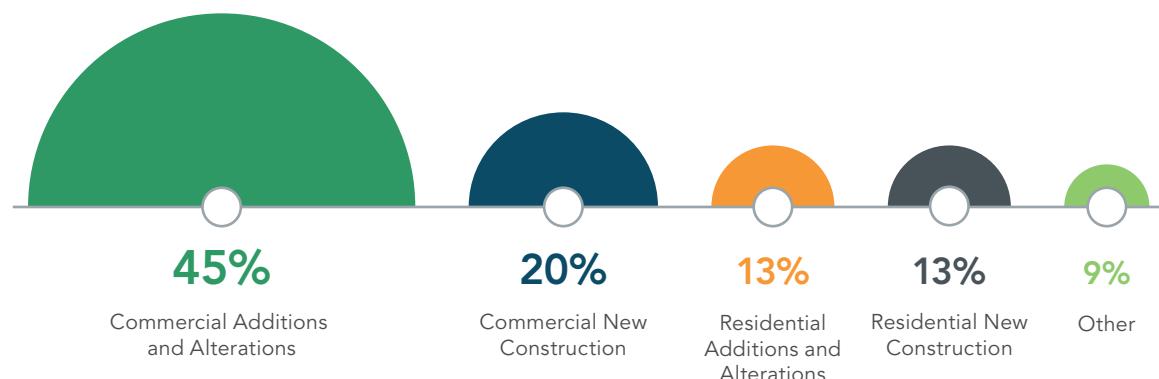
## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

### The C&S Market Assessment Survey | Technical Assistance Focus

As part of the same Market Assessment Survey mentioned above, technical assistance questions focused on what resources are needed by building professionals outside of trainings.

The Market Assessment survey identified areas for greater support for code compliance. For example, 45% of 50 public sector survey respondents indicated that they could benefit from energy code support on commercial additions and alterations.

C&S Market Assessment Survey – Most Complex Energy Code Aspects



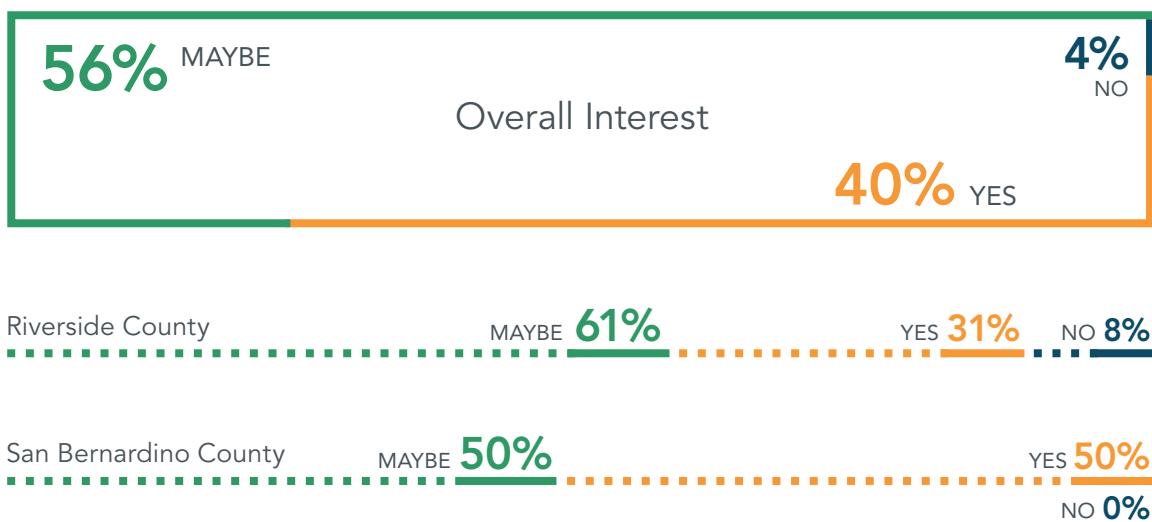
The C&S Technical Support program began its efforts by leveraging the Market Assessment Survey to understand the current challenges and needs facing both the public and private sector in the region.

Key survey findings:

- Both public and private sectors look to the CEC, colleagues, newsletters and trade organizations to learn about the energy code. Public sector prefers ICC chapter resources, while the private sector also cited social media as a means to learn about code.
- The survey requested information on desired training topics. Both private and public sector requested trainings on energy code navigation and compliance documentation. The public sector also expressed interest in lighting measures, SolarAPP+, mechanical measures; the private sector expressed interest in heat pumps, plans and specifications, quality insulation installation.

The below graphic shows interest in reach code or ordinance development by respondents in each county.

*C&S Market Assessment Survey – Reach Codes Interest*

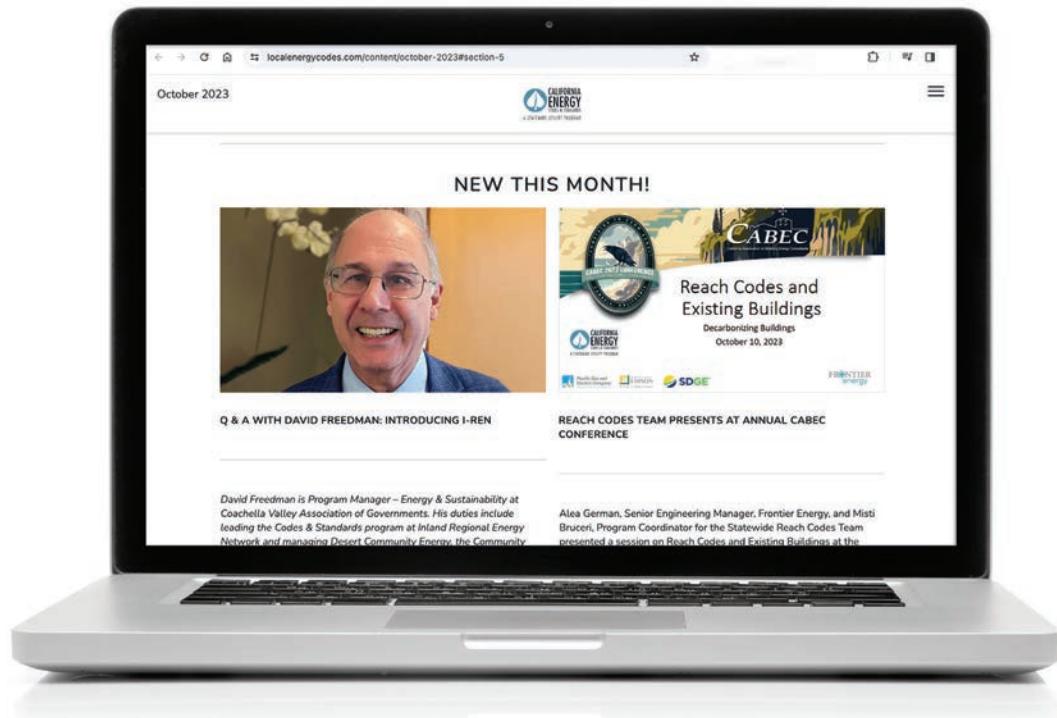


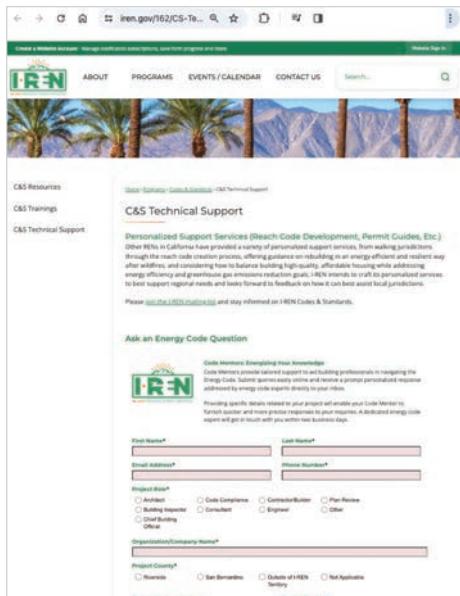
## Reach Codes Support

The Inland Empire is not typically seen as a leader in pushing its constituents beyond the required code minimums. However, the Market Assessment survey showed that half of jurisdiction respondents are open to developing Reach Codes, and the I-REN team aims to support them. In 2023, I-REN has supported Palm Springs with two in-progress Reach Code items:

- **Supporting the early adoption of 2025 Code Controlled Environment Horticulture (CEH) lighting efficiency measures.** A draft ordinance and findings have been completed. Although there are currently a reduced number of cannabis growers in Palm Springs, this can be a model ordinance for other areas in the region where there are more cannabis growers. In connection with this effort, I-REN provided comments on the text of the proposed measure to the Codes and Standards Enhancement (CASE) Team. The measure is included in the 2025 Code Pre-Rulemaking Express Terms released by the CEC in November 2023.
- **Supporting enhancing the existing home EE requirements,** based on an updated 2023 cost effectiveness study for home EE.

I-REN also participates in the monthly reach code activities on behalf of its constituents, and was featured in the statewide [Reach Code News Brief](#) monthly newsletter.





## Codes Assistance

Based on feedback and interest from jurisdictions received during orientations and the market assessment survey, I-REN partnered with the SolarAPP+ team to host a webinar on using its software to meet Senate Bill (SB) 379 compliance requirements.

*The webinar was I-REN's most-attended event in 2023.*

I-REN soft-launched its "Ask an Energy Code Question" service in 2023. This service allows building industry members to request expert support on a specific code question and is in line with the 30% of private sector Market Assessment survey respondents who preferred to receive energy code expert support online. The goal of this service is to provide an easy way for public and private sector building professionals to access tailored support for codes assistance, while also building or strengthening relationships with the building industry.

Finally, I-REN worked with other RENs to customize a permitting guide on Heat Pump Water Heaters for the region. The resources were posted online for building industry use.

## Research and Awareness-Building

In addition to hosting orientation meetings across the region, I-REN began developing materials to build awareness of C&S services. For example, rather than providing hard-copy flyers to permit desks, I-REN created and began working with jurisdictions to provide links to I-REN's website on their jurisdictions' permit pages—their "virtual permit desks." The team also began researching stakeholders to support outreach efforts and completing research into jurisdictions to better understand if they have existing Climate Action Plans and thus their potential readiness for more support.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, the C&S Technical Support program will continue building on the groundwork laid in 2023. In particular, the program aims to grow in three main areas:

- **CODES ASSISTANCE**

Continue outreach to jurisdictions and stakeholders to generate interest and activity in the "Ask an Energy Code Question" service, providing building professionals with easy access to code expertise. Leverage the information from the Market Assessment survey to provide discrete services that fit jurisdiction needs, including developing permit guides and offering support for energy code compliance software needs.

- **REACH CODES**

Continue to work with Palm Springs to provide Reach Codes support services. Follow up with jurisdictions that expressed interest in Reach Codes support in the Market Assessment survey and offer additional support with the Cost Effectiveness Explorer to help them identify reach code opportunities in their region.

- **TRAINING & EDUCATION**

Continue outreach to jurisdictions to offer customized trainings upon request. Building on the success of the 2023 SolarAPP+ webinar, offer additional training around SB379 reporting compliance.

**“ I attended your online training and found your program very useful. Please send me additional information for my jurisdiction to consider adopting and using the program. ”**

—Building Official, City of Coachella,  
following SolarAPP+ webinar



## Workforce Education & Training

Through its WE&T cross-cutting sector programs, I-REN will serve as a vital link between workforce skills and training providers such as community colleges and employers to build a more robust market and increase the number of skilled EE contractors in the Inland Empire.

These activities will promote job market recovery and progress toward statewide goals regarding EE; air quality; and support for HTRs, DACs, and underserved, rural, and tribal communities. Both Senate Bill (SB) 350 and SB 535 prioritize these communities for initiatives to improve air quality, increase EE, and address economic conditions. SB 350 emphasizes workforce development and increased project penetration in underserved communities. I-REN has an opportunity to support these goals through its WE&T initiatives.

### IREN-WET-001: WE&T Training and Education Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In its Training and Education Program, I-REN will assess the current training marketplace in the Inland Empire and work with local providers, including higher education providers, high schools, adult schools, and professional training companies to tailor content to be relevant to the region's needs and ensure that DACs are a focus. I-REN will collaborate with training providers to improve access to a broad spectrum of training opportunities in person, online, and in the field.

The Training and Education program creates a robust local network of training programs that increase capacity and knowledge related to EE in the building industry. I-REN focuses largely on entry-level offerings in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. I-REN and these offerings raise the value of EE training and career paths within high schools, community colleges, and universities; encouraging more people to enter an industry involving or relating to EE.

## I-REN WE&T Training & Education Program Overview



### COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Help diverse job seekers find employment opportunities.



### NO-COST TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Energy efficiency topics and trends.



### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Create job pathways to local companies.



### BENEFIT

Improve access to training opportunities in person, online, and in the field.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

### Workforce Market Assessment

In 2023, I-REN explored bringing on a subject matter expert to conduct an energy-focused workforce assessment within the I-REN territory. This workforce assessment will identify the energy workforce resources and their jurisdictional scopes that currently exist within Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Given the large geographic area of the area, this assessment will also include a gap analysis of the resources and provide recommendations on the design, development, and deployment of future I-REN WE&T programs. This assessment will be completed in 2024.

### I-REN WE&T Program and Partnership Exploration

- **EXPLORE** resources and potential partnerships for K-12, community colleges, and universities for energy career pathways.
- **CREATE** and provide job training, certifications, and innovations related to the energy field with industry stakeholders.
- **POTENTIAL** energy efficiency job fair.
- **CREATION** of an online virtual training learning center for energy efficiency.

## OUTREACH AND PRESENTATIONS

### Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce Workforce Roundtable

The Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce hosted a local workforce roundtable in September 2023. The purpose of this roundtable was to address the workforce issues and how they may be addressed in the region. I-REN attended this roundtable event, which provided the opportunity to connect with possible local community and education partners.

### DOE HVAC Paths Program Forum

The PATHS: Career Pathways to Advance the Trades in HVAC Services forum structures workforce education and training to target HVAC career pathways. The goal of this forum was to seek the latest information about HVAC resources in the region and to hear a local perspective regarding the industry as it pertains to Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The I-REN team attended this forum in September 2023, and connected with potential Inland Empire community and education partners.

### Foresight: Envisioning a Future-Ready Region Youth Action Project and Institute for the Future

I-REN staff were invited by Youth Action Project (YAP) to join local education and community leaders for the Foresight retreat in September 2023. This event was to address workforce issues and how they may be addressed in the Inland Empire region. This event played a unique role in I-REN's opportunity to provide outreach and network with local business and community leaders.

### Inland Empire Desert Regional Consortium (IEDRC)

In December 2023, the I-REN staff led a breakout session presentation to discuss the current I-REN WE&T Program and the strategies to connect the educational providers and develop a market assessment to determine effective training methodologies for green job pathways. This event played a role in I-REN's opportunities to outreach and network with local educational providers in K-12 and the community college leaders.

## FORMAL COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

### Science and Technology Education Partnership Conference

In 2023, The I-REN team entered a formal partnership with the Science and Technology Education Partnership Conference (STEP Con), which was established to bridge the skills gap

between the local K-12 students and high technology industry needs. The first of its kind in the region, this conference serves to ignite the imagination of thousands of students, so that they might pursue promising careers in high-technology fields. It also provides hands-on training to hundreds of K-12 teachers, ensuring that they have the latest tools to keep students competitive in the global marketplace.

### **Inland Empire/Desert Regional Consortium**

The I-REN team entered a formal partnership with the Inland Empire/Desert Regional Consortium (IEDRC), a collective of workforce education and training providers led by the community colleges in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The IEDRC partners include K-12, community college career and technical education and not-for-credit administrators, faculty, and staff. The IEDRC's projects and services support the work of not only community college and K-12 workforce stakeholders but extend to adult education, local workforce development boards, regional non-profit workforce entities, and others.

### **Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition**

The Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition (LGSEC) is a statewide membership network representing local government interests related to EE, clean energy, and climate resilience to state regulatory agencies. Together, LGSEC members advance sustainable energy and climate solutions to meet California's decarbonization goals through knowledge exchange, targeted learning opportunities, and statewide collaboration. I-REN offers its member agencies a sponsored, one-year membership with the LGSEC. As of February 2024, I-REN has signed up 12 cities for LGSEC membership and encourages their participation in the energy policy landscape. Participating cities include the Cities of: Canyon Lake, Colton, Corona, Jurupa Valley, Lake Elsinore, Palm Springs, Rancho Cucamonga, San Jacinto, Temecula, Twentynine Palms, the County of Riverside, and the Town of Apple Valley.

## **OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024 AND BEYOND**

### **Workforce Market Assessment (Implementation)**

Based on proposals solicited in 2023, in early 2024, the I-REN team recommended three on-call providers to deliver a workforce market assessment, expected to be completed mid-2024. The goal of the market assessment is to guide the I-REN staff on recommendations for future training programs related to energy job pathways.

# IREN-WET-002: WE&T Workforce Development Program

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I-REN will convene and collaborate with state, regional, and local stakeholders, including workforce investment boards (WIBs) and economic development departments to develop a unified mission around the region's EE workforce, highlighting pathways for job seekers to enter the green jobs market and to increase access for DACs. I-REN will facilitate identifying opportunities for employers and local workforce partners to network and connect.

With its governing agencies' existing networks of contractors and training providers, I-REN is well positioned to help bridge the gap between the energy industry and the workforce. I-REN is building partnerships with local community colleges, local universities, and local WIBs to establish a comprehensive network of WE&T offerings. I-REN also brings close connections with local government planning and building departments across the region. I-REN's proposed WE&T initiatives offer important opportunities for collaboration across other sectors through its work in the Public Sector and C&S—both of which are important drivers of EE and advanced energy activity and employment in the region.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

### I-REN Energy Fellows

In 2023, the I-REN WE&T Program deployed a total of 11 I-REN Energy Fellows with member agencies. Historically, member agencies in the I-REN region have lacked the capacity to track, monitor, implement, and comply with various energy and environmental statewide goals and requirements. The I-REN Fellows address this barrier by supporting and filling organizational capacity needs related to EE project identification; and energy-building identification and benchmarking; climate/energy action planning; outreach of workforce, education, and training into the communities; and other sustainability initiatives.

#### I-REN WE&T Energy Fellowship Overview

- Partnership with CivicSpark and AmeriCorps Program
- Minimum of an Associate's degree
- Fellowship project examples: facility audits, billing rate analysis, community outreach, energy efficiency facility identification

## Job Fairs

I-REN attended approximately 17 job fairs from September 2023 through November 2023. Through these job fairs, the I-REN team collected more than 200 interested job seeker slips and about 50 potential interested partner contacts. Some of these job fairs were conducted in partnership with Energy is Everything. I-REN has a system to collect interested job-seeker forms from prospective candidates. The information is compiled into a listserv. I-REN notifies the candidates who are registered in the listserv when the Energy Fellowship application is open, which may result in an Energy Fellow placement with a member agency.

17

Job fairs

200

Interested job  
seekers

50

Interested partner  
contacts



## COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023, the I-REN WE&T team met with more than 20 community partners, including the following:

- Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) Inland Empire Branch
- Barstow Community College
- California Baptist University
- CSUSB
- Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce
- CivicWell Climate Adaptation Forum
- Construction Trades Workforce Initiative (CTWI)
- Energy Code Ace
- Goodwill Career Resources Inland Empire
- Inland Empire Community Colleges Job Developers
- Inland Empire Desert Regional Consortium
- James Irvine Foundation
- Launch Apprenticeship Network
- Local Employment Development Department Veterans Division
- Mount San Jacinto College
- Riverside City College (RCC) Guardian scholars
- Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE)
- San Bernardino City Unified School District
- San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS)
- San Gorgonio High School (Jobs 4 California Graduates)
- Southern California energy Innovation Network
- Time for Change Foundation
- Tomorrow's Talent
- Youth Action Project

## OPPORTUNITIES IN 2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, the I-REN WE&T Team plans to provide additional training and resource opportunities for the I-REN Energy Fellows such as:

- Planned networking events
- Learning resource opportunities

Other planned 2024 events:

### March 2024 Energy & Infrastructure Showcase planned in partnership with IEDRC

The purpose of the event is to be a one-stop energy workforce ecosystem that will bring together Inland Empire community colleges, local agency staff, workforce organizations who will focus on the issues, barriers and resources to help connect, identify, and have conversations to determine training opportunities that will help to develop a green energy pathway for job seekers in the region.

### California Climate and Energy Collaborative Forum

The 15th Annual California Climate and Energy Collaborative (CCEC) Forum will be hosted in I-REN territory for two days in Palm Springs and will bring together local leaders in energy and climate actions for in-depth conversations between local and regional governments, and their partners in State agencies, CBOs, NGOs, and private sector service providers. The strong connections and partnerships fostered together through the forum provide a pivotal opportunity to cultivate climate action toward its full potential. The 2024 theme of "Collective Innovation: Cultivating Collaboration for Equitable Climate Action," aligns with I-REN's commitments to equity and cooperation among energy and climate stakeholders in the region and will explore innovative ideas and best practices for collaboration, increasing accessibility for DAC, and implementing climate action across sectors.



03.

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# Energy Savings

I-REN's Public Sector Resource Program began its program design and launch phase in 2023 and anticipates project activities beginning in 2024; therefore, there are no 2023 energy savings to report.



# 04.

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## Savings by End Use

I-REN's Public Sector Resource Program began its program design and launch phase in 2023 and anticipates project activities beginning in 2024; therefore, there are no 2023 energy savings by end use to report.



# 05.

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## Environmental Impacts

I-REN's Public Sector resource program began its program design and launch phase in 2023 and anticipates project activities beginning in 2024; therefore, there are no 2023 environmental impacts generated by the CPUC Cost-effectiveness Tool (CET).



# 06.

# Expenditures

I-REN's forecasted expenditures for 2023 are shown in the table below.

## *I-REN 2023 Budget Forecast*

PROGRAM ID	PROGRAM NAME	2023 BUDGET FORECAST
IREN-PUBL-001	Technical Assistance and Strategic Energy Planning Program	\$2,731,225
IREN-PUBL-002	Public Buildings NMEC Program	\$1,976,462
IREN-CS-001	C&S Training and Education Program	\$853,749
IREN-CS-002	Technical Support Program	\$616,590
IREN-WET-001	WE&T Training and Education Program	\$648,258
IREN-WET-002	Workforce Development Program	\$686,357
Program Subtotal		\$7,512,641
EM&V		—
<b>Total I-REN 2023 Budget Forecast</b>		<b>\$7,512,641</b>

I-REN expenditures in 2023 are shown below.

## *I-REN 2023 Actuals*

PROGRAM ID	ADMIN	MARKETING & OUTREACH	DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION	TOTAL
IREN-PUBL-001	\$205,604	\$23,264	\$1,374,976	\$1,603,844
IREN-PUBL-002	\$98,066	\$15,774	\$832,329	\$946,169
IREN-CS-001	\$46,193	\$19,323	\$633,623	\$699,139
IREN-CS-002	\$50,563	\$14,137	\$474,854	\$539,554
IREN-WET-001	\$62,264	\$14,029	\$582,942	\$659,235
IREN-WET-002	\$57,356	\$14,029	\$577,534	\$648,919
IREN-EMV-001	—	—	—	—
<b>I-REN Total</b>				<b>\$5,096,860</b>



# 07.

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## Cost-Effectiveness

REN PAs are exempt from cost-effectiveness thresholds, as recently reaffirmed in D.21-05-031.<sup>4</sup> However, I-REN manages its portfolio “with an eye toward long-term cost-effectiveness” as encouraged by CPUC,<sup>5</sup> as a good steward of ratepayer dollars.

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<sup>4</sup> D.21-05-031 Conclusion of Law 8 at 75: “Program administrators, with the exception of RENs, should be required to ensure that their energy efficiency resource acquisition programs exceed a 1.0 TRC on a forecasted basis, in order for the Commission to approve the programs.”

<sup>5</sup> D.16-08-019 at 12.



# 08. — Metrics

## Unique Value Metrics

D.19-12-021 directed proponent RENs to ...

*“...demonstrate new and unique value toward California’s energy, climate, and equity goals”<sup>6</sup>*

...and then file their progress toward their proposed unique value metrics once they were approved and operating. Accordingly, I-REN described its unique value proposition and value metric concepts in its Business Plan. I-REN’s Business Plan is based on a foundational Strategic Framework that establishes I-REN’s mission, vision, goals, and strategies, to be accomplished with various tactics as detailed in the business plan. Each of these verticals connects to I-REN’s value proposition and informed I-REN’s initial value metrics concepts proposed in the Business Plan:

1. **BUILDING** local government capacity to implement EE upgrades for municipal buildings and for improving code compliance.
2. **SUPPORTING** economic sustainability and a strong local workforce by connecting effective and equitable opportunities for local EE training and demand for EE upgrades.
3. **ESTABLISHING** long-lasting, scalable tools through the BUC that can be used in every city in the region for purposes including but not limited to sharing timely and accurate EE information, identifying rebates and incentives available through any PA’s programs, and helping to explain financing resources.

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<sup>6</sup> D.19-12-021 Conclusion of Law 9.

*I-REN Business Plan Strategic Framework*

## I-REN MISSION

To actively participate in California's Clean Energy initiatives and build a stronger clean energy economy and community.



## OUR VISION

To connect residents, businesses, and local governments to a wide range of energy efficiency resources to increase energy savings and equitable access throughout San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.



## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

**GOAL 1:** Build capacity and knowledge to enable local governments to effectively leverage energy efficiency services and to demonstrate best practices.

**GOAL 2:** Ensure that there is a trained workforce to support and realize energy efficiency savings goals across sectors.

**GOAL 3:** Work closely with local building departments and the building industry to support, train, and enable long-term streamlining of energy code compliance.

In 2023, I-REN undertook a process to hone these concepts into measurable REN Unique Value Metrics (UVMs). I-REN reviewed each unique value concept and identified a range of measurable and unique outcomes related to each concept. From these ideas, I-REN prioritized identifying a metric for each sector based on the following criteria:

- Metrics that indicate I-REN's unique value and were distinct from existing metrics
- Metrics for which methodology can be readily clarified
- Metrics for outcomes that can be measured sooner rather than later, based on program activity launch timelines

The selected I-REN UVMs are shown below. Metric concepts not immediately selected as UVMs may be further developed for tracking as internal key performance indicators that could eventually be used as UVMs in the future.

#### *I-REN Unique Value Metrics*

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##### **Percentage of partner jurisdictions that use I-REN guides and tools for code compliance**

###### **Codes & Standards**

One of I-REN's key unique strengths is its relationships with local governments through the founding agencies' work as councils/associations of governments. This metric is intended to show I-REN's progress on leveraging those relationships to engage with jurisdictions on C&S permitting and code compliance.

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##### **Number of BUC registrations in partner jurisdictions (total users)**

###### **Public Sector**

BUC registration is the entry point to accessing I-REN technical assistance services—the BUC portal allows for exploring possible savings opportunities for projects that public sector program participants could pursue via I-REN NMEC program and/or other PAs' programs; BUC also offers ability to establish and maintain ongoing relationships and associated data.

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##### **Number of fellows placed within partner jurisdictions**

###### **Workforce Education & Training**

I-REN fellowships are a crucial quick-start activity for WE&T and also provide cross-cutting benefits for Public Sector and C&S. Fellows play a role as EE champions at local jurisdictions to help advance EE projects in coordination with I-REN Public Sector technical assistance, such as benchmarking or strategic energy planning, and can supplement staff capacity to take on NMEC or other incentive projects and support permitting and code compliance with I-REN C&S support.

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As part of the evaluation of RENs in 2023, the Commission's evaluators conducted an assessment of I-REN's evaluability. This assessment examined I-REN's initial value concepts from the Business Plan and their connection to I-REN's strategic framework, the process I-REN undertook for evolving its value concepts into UVMs as outlined above, and the selected UVMs and data collected to date.

In the resulting Draft Inland Regional Energy Network Evaluability Memo,<sup>7</sup> the evaluation team found that I-REN's UVMs demonstrate its core values and are quantifiable and easily understandable. Moreover, the evaluation team recommended that future RENs adopt a similar approach to the process that I-REN took to develop its value concepts into measurable UVMs, by aligning UVMs with core REN values, distinguishing the UVMs from other existing metrics, and proposing a limited initial set of UVMs that can grow over time as needed.

## Equity and Market Support Indicators

D.23-06-055 adopted objectives and indicators for the market support and equity segments and designated how often indicators should be reported (quarterly or annually) and at what level (segment or whole portfolio). The decision also directed PAs to jointly submit a Tier 2 advice letter by no later than May 1, 2024, clarifying all of the adopted indicators. CAEECC subsequently formed an Equity and Market Support Working Group (EMSWG) charged with bringing together PAs and other stakeholders to address this and other topics in D.23-06-055. The EMSWG began convening in November 2023 and I-REN has been an active participant in all EMSWG meetings to date, has completed the homework assignments requested of PAs, and has responded to surveys and requests for feedback from EMSWG facilitators. I-REN is also an active participant in the parallel effort among the PAs to jointly develop other aspects of the May 1, 2024, advice letter.

## D.18-05-041 Common Metrics

In addition to clarifying the adopted equity and market support indicators, D.23-06-055 also ordered PAs to examine the metrics and indicators adopted in D.18-05-041. The first of several PA Common Metrics Meetings was held in December 2023. I-REN has been an active participant in those meetings and completed the assigned homework to review all common metrics and provide input regarding potential modifications. Any modifications recommended by the PAs will be included in the May 1, 2024, joint advice letter, along with clarifications of equity and market support indicators, as mentioned above.

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<sup>7</sup> California Public Utilities Commission Draft Inland Regional Energy Network Evaluability Memo. CPUC Deliverable 22: Year 4 Evaluation of RENs. Opinion Dynamics, Tierra Resource Consultants. October 27, 2023.

09.

# — Commitments

I-REN does not currently have customer commitments in the form of reserved incentive payments. However, I-REN has planned and budgeted for funds to be committed to numerous activities to support its portfolio in 2024 and beyond, including contracts with implementers, consultants, and vendors.



INLAND REGIONAL ENERGY NETWORK

