

Equity Advisory Group

Glossary of energy and equity related terms

This glossary is intended to be a living document. Its purpose is to provide a shared language and foundational understanding of energy and equity terms. This is not an exhaustive list, nor are these universally accepted definitions. We recognize definitions vary and continue to evolve, and the meaning behind these terms is often informed by lived experience.

References: Clean Energy Transformation Act; Initiative for Energy Justice; Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Term	Definition
AURORA	One of the models PSE uses for integrated resource planning. AURORA uses the western power market to produce hourly electricity price forecasts of potential future market conditions and identifies hypothetical portfolios of resources.
Base load	The minimum amount of electric power or gas needed to be supplied at any given time.
BESS	Battery energy storage system.
BNZC	Beyond Net Zero Carbon, the name of PSE's aspirational goal to reduce our own carbon emissions to net zero and go beyond that by helping other sectors to enable carbon reduction across our state.
Building performance standard	A policy which establishes performance baselines in various building applications including energy, gas, and water use, as well as emissions and peak energy demand.
Cap and Trade	A system for controlling carbon emissions and other forms of atmospheric pollution by which an upper limit is set on the amount a given business or other organization may produce but which allows further capacity to be purchased from other organizations that have not used their full allowance, or through other compliance mechanisms.
CAA	Clean Air Act
Carbon sequestration	A natural or artificial process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form.
Customer benefit indicator (CBI)	As defined by CETA, a customer benefit indicator is "an attribute, either quantitative or qualitative, of resources or related distribution investments associated with customer benefits described in RCW 19.405.040(8)." [WAC 480-100-605]
CEAP	Clean Energy Action Plan
CEIP	Clean Energy Implementation Plan
CETA	Clean Energy Transformation Act, which sets rules for PSE's electric energy supply. CETA includes the clean energy standards and ensuring all customer benefit from the clean energy transformation.
Clean energy	Under CETA, clean energy focuses on electric energy resources like renewable energy and alternative resources, like demand resource and distributed energy resources.
Climate action plan	Climate action plans are comprehensive roadmaps that outline the activities that an agency will undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions towards a specific reduction target.
Climate justice	The remediation of the impacts of climate change on poor people and people of color, and compensation for harms suffered by such communities due to climate change.

Term	Definition
Conservation	Measures to improve efficiency of customer's electric loads reducing energy use and reducing peak demand.
CRAG	PSE's Conservation Resource Advisory Group
Consumption	Consumption is the amount of electricity that customers use over the course of a year and it's measured in kilowatt hours.
Customer benefit indicator (CBI)	As defined by CETA, a customer benefit indicator is "an attribute, either quantitative or qualitative, of resources or related distribution investments associated with customer benefits described in RCW 19.405.040(8)." [WAC 480-100-605]
Demand	The amount of power being required by customers at any given moment, and it's measured in kilowatts.
Demand response (DR)	Flexible, price-responsive loads, which may be curtailed or interrupted during system emergencies or when wholesale market prices exceed the utility's supply cost.
Demand-side resources	These resources reduce demand. They include energy efficiency, distribution efficiency, generation efficiency, distributed generation and demand response.
Distributed energy resources (DER)	Small-scale electricity generators and other assets, like rooftop solar panels, that are located on the distribution system.
Distribution line	A distribution line is a medium-voltage (12.5 kV–55 kV) line that carries electricity from a substation to customers. Roughly half of PSE's distribution lines are underground. Distribution voltage is stepped down to service voltage through smaller transformers located along distribution lines
Distribution system	A distribution system is the medium-voltage (12.5 kV–35 kV) infrastructure that carries electricity from a substation to customers and includes the substation transformer.
EAG	Equity Advisory Group
Electric Resource Portfolio	A specific mix of electric resources to meet electric load.
Electrification	The conversion of a machine or system to the use of electrical power
Energy burden	The proportion of household income spent on energy, calculated as energy spending divided by total household income.
Energy democracy	A condition in which all the members of an energy system have a voice in decision making for that system.
Energy equity	Equity in all aspects of the energy system, including its benefits, burdens, costs, and participation.
Energy insecurity	The inability to meet basic household energy needs due to the high cost of energy.
EV	Electric vehicle.
Environmental justice	Recognition and remediation of the disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on communities of color and low-income communities.
GHG	Greenhouse gas.
Highly impacted communities (HIC)	As defined by CETA, a highly impacted community means "a community designated by the department of health based on the cumulative impact analysis required by RCW 19.405.140 or a community located in census tracts that are fully or partially on "Indian country," as defined in 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1151." [WAC 480-100-605]

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IAP2	International Association of Public Participation
Integrated Resource Plan (IRP)	Planning exercise that analyzes policies, costs, economic conditions and the energy system 20-plus years ahead to propose a starting point for making decisions about future resource procurement.
Intermittent resources	Resources that provide power where the time of generation can't be controlled, such as wind and solar power.
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
Kilovolt (kV)	A kilovolt (kV) is equal to 1,000 volts of electric energy. PSE uses kilovolts as a standard measurement when discussing things like distribution lines and the energy that reaches our customers.
Kilowatt hours (kWh)	Measurement of energy. PSE uses kilowatt hours to measure customer energy use, so you see it on your bill.
LIAC	PSE's Low Income Advisory Committee
Load	The total of customer demand plus planning margins and operating reserve obligations.
Megawatt (MW)	Unit of measurement of power. A megawatt (MW) is equal to 1,000,000 watts of electric energy. PSE uses megawatts as a standard measurement when discussing things like system load and peak demand.
Named communities	Refers to "Highly Impacted Community" and "Vulnerable Populations" (defined by CETA).
Net metering	A program that enables customers who generate their own renewable energy to offset the electricity provided by PSE.
Net zero carbon	Net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed or offset from the atmosphere. We reach net zero when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away.
Non-wires alternatives (NWA)	Alternatives that are not traditional poles, wires and substations. These alternatives can include demand reduction technologies, battery energy storage systems, and distributed generation.
Offset programs	Carbon offset programs allow individuals or companies to invest in carbon offset projects, locally or internationally, as a way of balancing their carbon footprint. For example, an individual can invest money in a wind power project in Costa Rica to offset the amount of carbon produced by their daily commute.
Peak demand	Customers' highest demand for electricity at any given time. It is measured in megawatts.
Pumped hydro	Pumped hydro facilities store energy in the form of water, which is pumped to an upper reservoir from a second reservoir at a lower elevation. During periods of high electricity demand, the stored water is released through turbines to generate power in the same manner as a conventional hydropower station.
Reliability	The dependability of electric service to customers. Reliability is measured in the duration and frequency of outages to customers.
Renewable energy	As defined by CETA, renewable energy is "water; wind; solar energy; geothermal energy; renewable natural gas; renewable hydrogen; wave, ocean, or tidal power;

Term	Definition
	biodiesel fuel that is not derived from crops raised on land cleared from old growth or first growth forests; or biomass energy.”[WAC 480-100-605]
Resiliency	Planning and preparedness for high impact, low frequency events
Substation	A substation is a vital component of electricity distribution systems, containing utility circuit protection, voltage regulation and equipment that steps down higher-voltage electricity to a lower voltage before reaching your home or business.
Supply-side resources	Resources that generate or supply electric power, or supply natural gas to gas sales customers. These resources originate on the utility side of the meter, in contrast to demand-side resources.
Transformer	A transformer is a device that steps electricity voltage down from a higher voltage, or steps it up to a higher voltage, depending on use. Typically it steps voltage down from a distribution voltage to 120 to 240 volts for customers' residential use. Transformers are the green boxes in some residences' front yard or the barrel-like canisters on utility poles.
Transmission line	Transmission lines are high-voltage lines that carry electricity from generation plants to substations or from substation to substation. Transformers at the substation "step down" the electricity's transmission voltage (55 to 230 kilovolts) to our primary distribution voltage (12.5 kV).
Vulnerable population (VP)	As defined by CETA, vulnerable populations means “communities that experience a disproportionate cumulative risk from environmental burdens due to: Adverse socioeconomic factors, including unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, access to food and health care, and linguistic isolation; and sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization.” [WAC 480-100-605]
Wholesale market purchases	Generally short-term purchases of electric power made on the wholesale market.
WUTC	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission