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Maury Galbraith
Executive Director
Colorado Electric Transmission Authority
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Re: CETA Principles of Community Engagement

Dear Director Galbraith:

Thank you to you, the board and your partners and contractors for preparing [CETA's Principles of Community Engagement](#) and for the opportunity to comment on this document. CETA's transparency and willingness to share both the outcome of your effort to develop principles of community engagement and also the literature review ([Electric Transmission Development and Community Engagement: Literature Review and Best Practices](#)) and other work products is a good start in furthering the practice of community engagement on transmission projects. I hope this is a document of principles and practices that evolves and improves as we all learn how to work better together.

These comments reflect my thoughts and suggestions alone, though many partners and colleagues talked with me about CETA's proposed principles and about community engagement more generally as I prepared them.

I focus below on a few issues of concern to me but know that I had the benefit of seeing and discussing **Western Resource Advocates' comments** and support them. I will reference WRA's comments as appropriate below but want to note the particular importance of WRA's suggestions about [meeting and working with tribes that have historical and cultural ties to an area](#). I urge CETA to heed WRA's comments about the on-going PUC proceeding (No. 24R-0306E) clarifying the process by which regulated electric utilities identify impacts to sites of historic and cultural significance to federally recognized Tribes. Once adopted, I hope you will incorporate the outcome in principle and practice, even when CETA's and its partners' project are not under direct jurisdiction of the PUC.

GENERAL COMMENTS

I appreciate that CETA has developed both [CETA's Principles of Community Engagement](#) and the minimum requirements for putting those principles into practice. This second step—putting the principles into practice—is where this document will make a real difference and the “minimum requirements” in each section are critical. I address those specific requirements below. At a high level, CETA should clarify:

- 1) **Who will follow these principles and requirements?** How will these principles and requirements apply to CETA itself?
- 2) **How will people be held accountable for these principles?** Will CETA ensure that partners in all levels of partnership (as defined in the [CETA Partnership Policy](#)) and contractors and subcontractors adhere to the Community Engagement Principles? If so, how?
- 3) **What's missing:** Some issues and best practices are missing from this document. I hope CETA will continue to work with state and federal agencies, communities and organizations, and the community engagement “community of practice” to find mechanisms to address these in practice:
 - **Engaging with tribal communities and members in addition to tribal elected representatives.**
 - **Engaging with labor as a critical stakeholder and developing best practices, community benefits, and oversight of company commitments.**
 - **Clearly defining accountability measures for these principles and requirements.**

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

INFORMATION SHARING: Principle 1: Require a transparent, credible, and open process. To build a credible stakeholder and community engagement process, CETA will require its partners to engage in open communication about projects and their impacts, provide access to fact-based educational materials and other resources, and provide an open and transparent exchange of information.

I appreciate that in Principle 1 CETA is committing to *requiring* a transparent, credible and open process and that CETA will require its partners, and as noted above, itself, to follow the minimum requirements in the principles document. I offer some specific suggestions.

1. **Transparency about Other Infrastructure Projects and Reasonably Foreseeable Connected Developments:** I applaud CETA for requiring partners to disclose other facilities planned to be built, owned or operated by CETA/partners and those “reasonably foreseeable estimated increases in third-party generation, substations, or storage projects in proximity to new transmission.” This is too rarely done outside EISs, and communities feel blindsided when they learn that they have been talking about transmission and a whole slew of other projects (like generation or substations) are also coming. I second WRA’s comment that information provided should include all relevant information and identify all potential impacts, including induced development. For an example of the possible scope of induced development, the 155-mile, 345 kV Western Spirit Transmission Line delivers power from two 345 kV collection systems totaling 67 miles that collect power from four Western Spirit Wind Projects with a total of 377 turbines. It can be a lot—and the benefits can be great, but the community needs to understand what might be coming. For projects in which CETA is a partner, we would expect all of those induced developments to be fully communicated, whether CETA/Partners have a direct interest in them or not.
2. **Project Points of Contact:** Having a clear point of contact is very important. CETA should add to this requirement a requirement that the POC will be reasonably responsive to the enquiries and feedback. This may seem implied, but we have all been given a contact for

something that mattered to us and not had our calls returned or issues addressed. Being reasonably accessible and responsive is what matter.

COMMUNICATION: Principle 2: Require meaningful engagement with local communities. To ensure that local input is integrated into the decision-making process, CETA will require its partners to conduct early, responsive, and inclusive communication with local communities and stakeholders.

1. **Land Agent Code of Conduct:** When I first read these principles, I was very pleased to see the Land Agent Code of Conduct. The behaviors listed are good: respectful, forthright, and truthful. I hope that the code of conduct will be expanded in practice through training and culture. Some of the other practices—like **Fair Land Owner Compensation** that calls for consistent methodology applied as uniformly as possible for a project, providing **Language Services**, and others may be contrary to the way Land Agents have been incentivized in the past.
2. **Private Tribal Meetings:** As noted above, I support in full WRA's comments about engaging with tribes. I also recommend that CETA require public meetings with tribal community leaders and members, in addition to meeting with elected tribal officials.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS: Principle 3: Advocate for public resources and both financial and non-financial benefits that support local communities. CETA recognizes that local communities should benefit from hosting transmission projects in their community and may need additional resources to effectively evaluate proposed transmission projects and influence project design and siting decisions.

I am glad to see CETA acknowledge that it is important that benefits flow from transmission projects to impacted communities and landowners and that the nature and management of those benefits be “self-determined” by the community. I am dismayed that there are not “minimum requirements” in this section.

This section needs to be strengthened:

1. The intro and the bullets should reflect that project developers should be providing community benefits from their projects, and those benefits should be especially significant where significant public funding is being used for the project. The lead into this section sounds like community benefits should come from public resources, not from the project developers. Project developers should make enforceable commitments to the communities through community benefits agreements and other mechanisms. With respect to Tribes, CETA should look at creative ways to work on financing with Tribes so, at a minimum, they can be owners of transmission that crosses their lands and receive the most valuable benefit, that ownership.
2. **Labor** should be recognized as a community stakeholder and benefits to workers should be part of this section. CETA should acknowledge labor as stakeholders, commit to engaging workers in community workforce agreements/project labor agreements and/or practices like those laid out for distribution level projects in [Colorado SB 218](#) as well as [DOE's community benefits materials](#) , and consider setting up **Access and Opportunity**

Committees to monitor and support compliance with labor, diversity and equity goals of the project. (See <https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/project-labor-agreement-resource-guide>) CETA should also commit to working with its partners, contractors to engage stakeholders around best labor practices, including ensuring the use of qualified subcontractors, local workers as much as possible, and providing opportunities for apprenticeships and career development.

3. **Resources for Communities:** It is good that CETA recognizes the need for and benefits of providing funds for communities to hire third-party consultants to advise on the proposed project. How this is done requires further discussion and definition and like with community benefits, it will need to be done in a way that truly provides “self-determination” of this benefit by the local community or it can end up feeling coercive.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Principle 4: Require long-term commitments to host communities. Transmission infrastructure is used for decades; a similar commitment should be enforced for local communities hosting that infrastructure.

This section is very important to ensure that CETA, its partners, contractors, and subcontractors are accountable for the long-term impacts and remediation and that the communities have clear, enforceable commitments that ensure that they have protections and benefits for the entire lifecycle of the transmission project. I appreciate the inclusion of clear points of contacts—real people the community can work with through the life of the project—and the inclusion of a dispute resolution process for project commitments, but the question of accountability runs throughout this principles (and requirements) document and, as WRA says, requires more dialogue.

Conclusion

Thank you for developing these principles and requirements and sharing them with the public for feedback. I look forward to working with you as you refine them and implement them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pam Eaton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pam Eaton
Principal
Green West Strategies