



Regional Utility Rate Summit

November 14, 2025



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Letter from Executive Braddock

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

Thank you for joining the Utility Rate Summit. Your presence here matters because the choices we make together shape the daily lives of people across King County. I write with a simple purpose: to acknowledge the pressures our communities and utility providers face and to invite honest and practical collaboration to keep these essential services as dependable and affordable as possible.

Utilities in King County are as diverse as the communities they serve. Some manage drinking water, others wastewater, stormwater, energy, electricity, or solid waste. Some serve dense urban neighborhoods, others rural communities. Despite differences, one thing unites every utility represented here: delivering services that are essential to life, to public health, and to the economic vitality of our region. While utility systems are often invisible to the public, their reliability is the foundation upon which homes stay healthy, businesses thrive, schools run, and our environment is protected.

Keeping rates affordable is both practical and the right thing to do. Today we will learn more about the drivers of rising costs and start a conversation on how we as policymakers can support a sustainable path forward. We will be candid about tradeoffs and deliberate about protecting those most at risk from rate increases.

We do not have to agree on every operational detail to act together where it matters most. I ask you to commit to three things at this summit: listen, share ideas, and pledge to act. Thank you for bringing your expertise, your questions, and your willingness to find common ground as we work to deliver for our communities. The pages ahead are intended to inform and to prompt action.

Thank you for being part of this summit—let us use this moment to strengthen the affordability of utility service across King County.

Sincerely,



Shannon Braddock

King County Executive

Executive Summary

King County residents face rising utility costs driven by aging infrastructure, regulatory mandates, capital investments, and market pressures. The Regional Utility Rate Summit convenes elected officials, utility leaders, and stakeholders to build a shared understanding of these rate drivers and explore collaborative strategies to protect affordability.

Utilities across the region are navigating complex challenges, including increasing capital expenses, environmental compliance, labor shortages, and funding constraints. While each utility operates under unique conditions, they share common pressures that affect ratepayers countywide.

The 2025 Rate Stack offers a representative snapshot of the monthly utility costs for a single-family household in King County. It illustrates the need for coordinated action to manage rate increases while maintaining essential services.

Summit participants will engage in presentations, facilitated discussions, and a leadership panel focused on identifying actionable solutions. Key strategies include policy advocacy, investment prioritization, permitting reform, workforce development, and expanded affordability programs.

The summit aims to launch ongoing regional collaboration, inform policy conversations, and secure actionable commitments to curb rising utility rates and promote long-term affordability.

Purpose Statement, Goals, & Desired Outcomes

Purpose Statement

The region faces significant increases in utility rates¹. The Regional Utility Rate Summit will bring together elected officials and other interested parties to acknowledge the urgency of the issue and to collaborate at a regional level with the goal of better understanding current regional rates and what drives them. Attendees will also identify and explore actions to potentially mitigate rising costs.

Goals for the Summit

- Provide an understanding of the short-term regional utility rate impacts to households and businesses.
- Develop a shared understanding of the economic and environmental value and benefits ratepayers receive from utility operational and capital investments – and that these benefits can be tradeoffs to rate increases.
- Identify primary drivers for utility rate increases to create a shared understanding of why rates are going up.
- Identify shared and unique levers to mitigate rate impacts and explore actionable strategies to move those levers.
- Develop commitments for ongoing collaboration on strategies to inform and enhance existing policy discussions at regional committees.

Desired Outcomes of the Summit

- Ensure utilities can provide essential utility services for current and future generations in a sustainable and equitable manner.
- Launch ongoing work to identify and act on individual and regional strategies that would ensure utility services while advancing affordability.
- Secure a commitment from attendees to work together to actively advance the goals of the Summit and pursue practical solutions.
- Convene a follow up forum to deepen the conversation about household impacts.
- Share legislative strategies and explore policy pathways that support affordability.

¹ This includes solid waste, water, wastewater, electricity, and energy. This does not include the portion of rates necessary to support local, retail utility infrastructure and service, as it varies throughout the region. This also excludes stormwater, cable, and other rates which vary similarly.

Agenda

Date and Time: Friday, November 14, 2025 | 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Seattle Airport, Grand Room 3
18740 International Boulevard, Seattle, Washington, 98188, USA

Facilitator: John Mahoney

Time	Activity	Location/Speaker
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Doors Open, Registration, and Networking	Grand Room 3
9:00 – 9:20 AM	Opening Remarks (recorded)	Grand Room 3
9:00 AM	Welcome	John Mahoney
9:05 AM	Utilities in the Puget Sound Region	CM Penny Sweet
9:15 AM	Briefing Book Orientation	John Mahoney
9:20 – 11:00 AM	Utility Presentations (recorded)	Grand Room 3
9:20 AM	Introduction	John Mahoney
9:25 AM	➤ Water – Seattle Public Utilities	Alex Chen
9:35 AM	➤ Water – Cascade Water Alliance	Andy Baker
9:45 AM	➤ Wastewater – King County Wastewater Treatment Division	Courtney Black
9:55 AM	➤ Solid Waste – King County Solid Waste Division	Chris Stubbs
10:05 AM	➤ Electricity – Seattle City Light	Carsten Croff
10:15 AM	➤ Energy – Puget Sound Energy	Matt Steuerwalt
10:25 AM	2025 Rate Stack	Dwight Dively
10:35 AM	Wrap Up & Q&A via Menti poll	John Mahoney
11:00 – 11:10 AM	Break	Grand Room 3
11:10 AM – 12:10 PM	Facilitated Discussions	
	Group 1 (pink)	Evergreen 1
	Group 2 (blue)	Evergreen 2
	Group 3 (green)	Evergreen 3
	Group 4 (orange)	Evergreen 4
	Group 5 (purple)	Grand Room 3
12:10 – 12:45 PM	Lunch	Grand Room 3
12:45 – 1:45 PM	Leadership Panel (recorded)	Grand Room 3
	➤ Deputy Mayor Laura Mork, Shoreline	
	➤ Dwight Dively, King County	
	➤ Andrew Lee, Seattle Public Utilities	
	➤ Chuck Clarke, Woodinville Water District	
	➤ Matt Steuerwalt, Puget Sound Energy	
	Wrap Up & Q&A via Menti poll	
1:45 – 2:00 PM	Closing Remarks (recorded)	Grand Room 3
	Introduction	Robert Feldstein
	➤ King County Executive Shannon Braddock	
2:00 PM	Adjournment	

Speakers, Presenters, and Panelists

Opening Remarks



Councilmember Penny Sweet joined the Kirkland City Council in 2010 and has served in multiple leadership roles, including Deputy Mayor for four years and Mayor for five. A Kirkland resident since 1984, her professional background includes a 31-year career with Group Health Cooperative, where she retired as Associate Director of Business Operations in 2007. She managed operations for multiple medical centers and participated in community outreach through Group Health's Community Action Teams.

Councilmember Sweet has served on numerous boards and committees, including the Kirkland Downtown Association, Kirkland Arts Center, Hopelink, and the Kirkland Heritage Society. More relevant to today's discussion, Councilmember Sweet has a long history of policy leadership in regional utilities. This includes ten years on the Regional Water Quality Committee over the last twelve, fourteen years on the King County Metropolitan Solid Waste Advisory Committee including thirteen as Chair, six years on the Solid Waste Advisory Committee, and sixteen years on the Cascade Water Alliance board including three as Chair.

Councilmember Sweet has received multiple honors for her civic contributions, including the Anne G. Owen Award for Community Service, the Chamber's President's Award, and the William C. Woods "Above & Beyond" Award.

Utility Subject Matter Expert Presentations

Focus: Shared and unique rate drivers

- **Puget Sound Energy** - Matt Steuerwalt, Senior Vice President of External Affairs
- **Seattle City Light** - Carsten Croff, Manager of Financial Planning and Rates
- **Cascade Water Alliance** - Andy Baker, Economist
- **Seattle Public Utilities** - Alex Chen, Deputy Director, Drinking Water
- **King County Solid Waste Division** - Chris Stubbs, Deputy Director
- **King County Wastewater Treatment Division** - Courtney Black, CFO



Matt Steuerwalt is Senior Vice President of External Affairs for Puget Sound Energy.

Steuerwalt has spent more than two decades working on complex policy issues in the public and private sectors. He joined PSE from Insight Strategic Partners, a Seattle-based public affairs firm specializing in government relations, public policy and strategic communications.

Prior to that, Matt served in senior policy roles for both Governor Jay Inslee and Governor Chris Gregoire. In between his service to the two Governors, Matt was a senior vice president at Strategies 360, leading work in several states for several national and regional energy, technology and industrial manufacturing clients.



Carsten Croff is the Manager of Financial Planning and Rates at Seattle City Light, where he has worked since 2007. In his current position, he leads financial and pricing strategies that support the utility's long-term fiscal health and advance Seattle's clean energy and policy objectives. Carsten holds a Master of Science in Applied Economics and a Graduate Certificate in Energy Analysis and Policy from the University of Wisconsin.



Andy Baker is the Economist for Cascade Water Alliance. He has broad experience in the utility industry, working in utility finance and rates, design engineering, utility regionalization, and consent decree negotiations, as both a consultant and as utility staff. He has worked for water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities across the United States, ranging from rural utility districts to major regional utilities, delivering utility rate studies, developing financial policies, and creating capital funding strategies. Andy serves on the American Water Works Association Rates and Charges Committee and Affordability subcommittee.



Alex Chen is the Deputy Director for the Water Line of Business at Seattle Public Utilities, leading SPU’s drinking water system. He supervises SPU’s Watershed Management Division, Water Quality Division, Water Planning and Program Management Division, Water Operations and System Maintenance Division. He has worked in utilities for 30 years, 20 at SPU. Alex is a Professional Engineer, Level 4 Water Treatment Operator, and Level 4 Water Distribution Manager.



Chris Stubbs is the Deputy Director for King County Solid Waste Division. Prior to joining King County, Chris served on the leadership team responsible for managing Hennepin County's solid waste and environmental management systems in Minnesota. Within King County Solid Waste Division, Chris is part of the senior management team and supports development of policies and strategies that advance the vision, mission, and values of the division. He guides resource allocation and serves as executive sponsor to programs, committees, strategic initiatives and projects. Chris has over 15 years of experience in the public sector solid waste management industry.



Courtney Black is the Chief Financial Officer for the King County Wastewater Treatment Division. She has nearly 25 years of utility rates and finance experience in the Pacific Northwest, including 18 years with a utility rates and finance consulting firm. She recently served a three-year term on the EPA Environmental Financial Advisory Board and was a contributing author to the Board’s January 2025 publication, “Advancing Water Affordability Nationwide: A Framework for Action”. She serves on the Water Quality Financial Assistance Council which guides the Department of Ecology on managing water quality grants and loans, and she authored Municipal Research Services Center guidance on Funding Utility Infrastructure. Courtney leads a team that supported WTD Consent Decree negotiations by preparing a Financial Capability Assessment to help evaluate affordability in the WTD service area.

Leadership Panel

Focus: Rate mitigation strategies, next steps, call to action

- **Sound Cities Association** –Laura Mork, Shoreline Deputy Mayor and City Council
- **King County** - Dwight Dively, Budget Development and Monitoring
- **City of Seattle** - Andrew Lee, PE, PMP, PgMP; CEO, Seattle Public Utilities
- **Water/Sewer Districts** - Chuck Clarke, Woodinville Water District Commissioner
- **Puget Sound Energy** - Matt Steuerwalt, Senior Vice President of External Affairs



Deputy Mayor Laura Mork has been on the Shoreline City Council since 2021 and currently serves as its Deputy Mayor. She represents the Sound Cities Association on the Regional Water Quality Committee and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee and is active with the King County Cities for Climate Collaboration. She is also member of the National League of Cities' Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources Committee (EENR), where she contributes to policy

discussions on sustainability and infrastructure. Previously, Laura served as a Commissioner for the Ronald Wastewater District and served two terms on the City of Shoreline Planning Commission. An engineer with Lean training, she is a certified Project Management Professional and Certified Energy Manager.



Dwight Dively leads the office responsible for developing and monitoring the biennial King County budget, identifying and tracking performance measures, developing and implementing the King County Comprehensive Plan, and implementing Lean in the county's operations. He oversees a wide range of activities, including project analysis, financial forecasting, program evaluation, demographic analysis, and policy development. Dwight has also been the county's Chief

Operating Officer since 2020. Prior to King County, Dwight had a 22-year career with the City of Seattle, most recently as Director of Finance and leading the city's financial and budget management initiatives between 1994 and 2010. He is also an affiliate assistant professor at the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.



Andrew Lee is the Chief Executive Officer for Seattle Public Utilities, where he has worked for over 12 years. Andrew has spent his entire 24-year career working on water, wastewater, and stormwater issues, with 18 of those years in local government for Seattle, San Francisco, and Bellevue. Andrew is widely recognized for his expertise in water and wastewater regulations, smart water technology, and asset management. He is committed to delivering high quality utility services, maintaining affordable rates, and partnering with and serving the community with a focus on environmental justice, and is committed to championing diversity, equity and inclusion.



Chuck Clarke is a Commissioner for the Woodinville Water District, member of Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC), and former CEO of Cascade Water Alliance. Under his leadership, Cascade embarked on an extensive public process to determine how best to deliver water supply to its members over the next 50 years. Chuck also served as Director of Seattle Public Utilities and was one of Seattle’s deputy mayors. He was Regional Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency and has also served as Director for the Washington State Department of Community Development and Ecology.

Closing Remarks



Shannon Braddock was sworn in as King County Executive in May 2025 after a unanimous vote by the King County Council. She is the first woman to serve as King County Executive. Braddock previously served as Deputy County Executive and has 15 years of local government experience.

Her prior roles at King County include Deputy Executive, Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff and Council Relations Director in former Executive Dow Constantine’s office, as well as Chief of Staff for former Councilmember Joe McDermott. She was previously a PTA leader and a board member at nonprofit organizations WestSide Baby and the West Seattle Food Bank.

Acronyms and Definitions

Acronym	Full Name	Definition/Description
C & D	Construction and Demolition	Refers to debris generated during the building, renovation, or tearing down of structures. It includes materials like concrete, wood, metals, drywall, asphalt, and glass.
CAP	Customer Assistance Program	Utility-sponsored programs that help eligible customers manage and reduce their bills.
CapEx	Capital Expenditures	Long-term investments in infrastructure, facilities, or equipment.
CEC	Contaminants of Emerging Concern	Chemicals or substances (e.g. pharmaceuticals, PFAS, solvents) that are increasingly found in waste streams and may pose risks to health or the environment and are not yet fully regulated.
CSO	Combined Sewer Overflow	Discharge of untreated wastewater and stormwater during heavy rainfall events.
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	Federal agency responsible for protecting human health and the environment.
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility	Policy approach that holds producers accountable for the end-of-life management of their products.
FAC	Fixed Annual Cost	A stable, predictable cost component in utility rate structures.
ILA	Interlocal Agreement	A formal contract between public agencies to share utility services, infrastructure, or responsibilities across jurisdictions.
LIHEAP	Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program	Federal program that helps low-income households pay for heating and cooling.
LIHWAP	Low Income Household Water Assistance Program	Federal program that helps low-income households pay for water and wastewater services.
LRF	Landfill Reserve Fund	Dedicated fund for long-term landfill maintenance, closure, and environmental compliance.
NACWA	National Association of Clean Water Agencies	Advocacy group representing public wastewater and stormwater agencies nationwide.
NERTS	Northeast Recycling & Transfer Station	Planned King County Solid Waste Division facility to improve recycling and waste transfer capacity.

O&M	Operations and Maintenance	Day-to-day costs of running utility systems and facilities.
OpEx	Operational Expenditures	Ongoing expenses for utility operations, including labor, materials, and services.
PFAS	Polyfluroalkyl Substance	Persistent chemicals found in consumer products that pose environmental and health risks.
PSE	Puget Sound Energy	Regional electric and natural gas utility serving parts of King County and nine other counties.
RWQC	Regional Water Quality Committee	Develops, reviews, and recommends countywide policies and plans addressing wastewater treatment and sewer service issues, long range capital facilities plans, rate policies, and facilities siting.
SCA	Sound Cities Association	Coalition of King County cities advocating for regional collaboration and policy alignment.
SCL	Seattle City Light	City of Seattle public electric utility serving Seattle and surrounding areas.
SCRTS	South County Recycling & Transfer Station	King County Solid Waste Division facility under development to expand recycling and waste transfer services.
SPU	Seattle Public Utilities	City of Seattle department providing stormwater and wastewater connection services and solid waste in Seattle, and retail and wholesale drinking water regionally.
SRF	State Revolving Fund loans	Low-interest loans for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, administered by states with federal funds.
SWD	King County Solid Waste Division	County agency managing waste collection, recycling, and landfill operations.
UTC	Utilities and Transportation Commission	A three-member commission appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. Regulator of Puget Sound Energy.
WIFIA	Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loans	Federal loan program offering favorable terms for large-scale water infrastructure projects.
WTD	King County Wastewater Treatment Division	County agency responsible for regional wastewater treatment and water quality protection.
WWTS	Wet Weather Treatment Station	Facility designed to treat excess wastewater during storm events to prevent overflows.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why isn't stormwater being discussed?

A: Stormwater is a retail-only utility service, with no region-wide service provider to participate in the Rate Summit. Each local jurisdiction is responsible for this service. The amount shown in the Rate Stack represents a weighted average of the typical single family household's stormwater utility service amongst the jurisdictions served by King County Wastewater.

Q: Why do some utilities talk about Customer Assistance Programs (CAPs) and some do not?

A: Customer Assistance Programs (CAPs) are important tools for helping households afford essential utility services. Because they apply to individual households, CAPs are a 'retail' level program - only utilities that directly bill customers are able to implement them. Of the utilities participating in the summit, only Puget Sound Energy, Seattle City Light, and Seattle Public Utilities directly bill retail households. The other participating utilities charge cities and districts for their regional wholesale service - it is the responsibility of those cities and districts to provide CAPs for their retail household customers.

Q: I recently upgraded to a heat pump, and my gas bill went down and electricity went up, how is that represented in the 2025 rate stack?

A: The rate stack is representative of a customer who uses space and water heating with natural gas. Your actual bill is different than what is shown because of variance in usage, meter sizes, services, taxes, fees, jurisdiction rates, etc.

Q: Why are the costs on the 2025 Rate Stack different than what was presented by the utilities?

A: The Rate Stack is designed to represent total customer impact across services, not just individual utility costs. Each utility uses different assumptions for usage, rate structure, and service components, making standardized comparisons challenging.

Q: How will Artificial Intelligence (AI) affect my utility rates?

A: AI is expected to drive up electricity demand and utility rates in the Pacific Northwest, primarily due to the water and energy-intensive nature of AI data centers and the infrastructure investments required to support them.

Q: Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (CHRLF) is estimated to reach capacity by 2040, what happens to the solid waste in King County after that? How does that affect affordability?

A: The Solid Waste Division commissioned a Long-Term Disposal study in 2019 to explore new long-term disposal strategies, including waste export, waste-to-energy, and maximization of the landfill. This last option was selected and approved in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. Additional options under consideration include waste export by rail and waste-to-energy. Complementary approaches include incorporating advanced technologies and regional partnerships. Any transition will likely involve significant infrastructure investments with potential impacts on solid waste affordability.

The next disposal option has yet to be decided. More information can be found here:

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/waste-services/garbage-recycling-compost/solid-waste-planning-monitoring/comprehensive-solid-waste-management-plan>

Q: What are some of the state laws that apply to the oversight and ratemaking process of a company like Puget Sound Energy?

A: [RCW 80.01.040](#) General powers and duties of Washington Utilities and Transportation commission (UTC).

RCW 80.01.040(3) directs the UTC to: “Regulate in the public interest, as provided by the public service laws, the rates, services, facilities, and practices of all persons engaging within this state in the business of supplying any utility service or commodity to the public for compensation.”

[RCW 34.05.422](#) Ratemaking must be done through an adjudicative process

[RCW 80.28.010](#) UTC must establish rates that are fair, just, reasonable and sufficient

[RCW 80.04.250\(2\)](#) “Used and useful for service in Washington: The commission has power...to ascertain and determine the fair value for rate making purposes of the property of any public service company used and useful for service in this state by or during the rate effective period and shall exercise such power whenever it deems such valuation or determination necessary or proper under any of the provisions of this title. The valuation may include consideration of any property of the public service company acquired or constructed by or during the rate effective period, including the reasonable costs of construction work in progress, to the extent that the commission finds that such an inclusion is in the public interest and will yield fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient rates.”

Shared Rate Drivers Across Utilities

This summary of shared rate drivers is based on the PowerPoint slides provided by utilities.

Systemic pressures shared across all utilities:

- **Aging Infrastructure & Asset Renewal** Long-deferred maintenance and replacement needs across pipes, plants, cables, and facilities.
- **Regulatory Compliance & Uncertainty** Includes PFAS², nutrient removal, CSO mandates, hydro relicensing, and clean energy laws.
- **Capital Investments** Multiple large projects occurring simultaneously, creating rate spikes and financing pressure. All utilities are engaged in major infrastructure upgrades or expansions, from transmission mains to recycling stations.
- **Labor, Procurement & Market Costs** Higher construction costs, limited labor, supply chain delays, and tariff risks.
- **Environmental Mandates & Resource Modernization** Clean energy mandates, watershed protection, landfill regulations, and climate resilience.
- **Funding Challenges & Affordability Pressure** Limited grant availability, reliance on ratepayer funding, cost of living increases, and growing need for customer assistance.

² More information about the acronyms and definitions can be found in the Acronyms and Definitions section of this document.

Strategies to Address Rate Drivers

High-impact strategies and opportunities to address shared rate drivers. This list is meant as a starting point for discussion and is not meant to be comprehensive.

Policy & Legislative Advocacy

- Advocate for **increased state allocations** targeted to enterprise funds (solid waste, stormwater, wastewater, drinking water). Protect existing state funding for utility infrastructure, stormwater and clean-up grants, culverts, and others.
- Support **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation** to reduce landfill volumes.
- Champion expanded **State Revolving Fund (SRF) loans** and larger-state-award caps; support state matching to increase SRF reach.
- **Federal advocacy** for more Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loans capacity, forgivable grants for disadvantaged communities, and dedicated PFAS remediation funds.
- **New interlocal agreements (ILAs)** to enable jurisdictions to share infrastructure, coordinate projects, and streamline operations. By pooling resources and aligning timelines, agencies reduce duplication, qualify for better financing, and deliver services more efficiently—ultimately stretching public dollars further.

Investment Prioritization

- **Reduce controllable utility expenses** while maintaining essential service levels through strategic investment to:
 - Streamline operations and maintenance (O&M).
 - Improve procurement, staffing, and technology efficiency.
 - Apply clear prioritization frameworks:
 - “Must do” vs. “Nice to do,” with timing considerations.
 - Use criticality criteria to guide investment decisions.

Streamline Permitting and Regulatory Implementation

- **Expedite permitting** for essential public facilities to reduce delays and cost escalation.
 - Establish fast-track timelines, single-point coordination, and standardized conditionality limits.
 - Launch a permitting pilot for critical public-works projects in a sample corridor to demonstrate cost savings.

- Convene **state-local working groups** to align permit conditions with utility service delivery and reduce non-essential mitigation costs.
- Request **phased regulatory implementation timelines** that support planning, financing, and affordability—especially where multiple mandates may stack (e.g., phased PFAS or nutrient rules tied to a timeline that supports rate affordability).

Improve Procurement and Workforce Flexibility

- Support **exemptions or tailored procurement pathways** for public utilities for critical projects—such as prequalified vendor lists, design-build allowances, and higher thresholds for in-house work—to reduce cost and time.
- Invest in **workforce development and apprenticeship incentives** targeted at utility trades to address labor shortages and long-term labor cost escalation.

Advance Affordability Measures

- Support **permanent federal funding for affordability programs** such as Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP).
- Support **conservation and efficiency programs** and fund outreach that reduce customer consumption and delay capital needs.
- Promote a **default opt-in model** for Customer Assistance Programs across regional utilities—“sign up for one, sign up for all.”

Regional partnerships, coordinated planning, communications

- Incentivize **multi-jurisdictional project coordination** (e.g. co-siting, bundled procurement, shared construction windows) where it can reduce community impacts and construction premiums.
- Promote **shared-resilience projects** (e.g. interties, joint treatment/storage) to spread costs across beneficiaries.
- **Co-create and coordinate messaging** across jurisdictions to tell the full story of utility services, e.g. what they cost, why they matter, and how they’re evolving. Invite community voices to help shape and deliver these messages in ways that resonate locally.
- **Engage communities as co-designers and advocates**, not just recipients. Partner with residents to unpack the drivers behind rising rates, build shared understanding, and collaboratively develop sustainable, equitable solutions that reflect local priorities.