

## **Summary Abstract for Public Release**

Pathways Initiative: Wholesale Electricity Market Engagement in the West

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The Western Interconnection is a large and geographically diverse part of the U.S. grid. While the West is experiencing challenges with an aging grid, rapid electrification, and extreme weather events, this region also possesses a diverse energy resource potential to support the grid and enhance its reliability and resiliency.

Longstanding efforts to create a coordinated western regional transmission organization, which would more efficiently deploy resources and manage the transmission system, have been unsuccessful for several reasons, including challenges developing an equitable governance structure. In July 2023, a group of five western state regulators called for the creation of a separate, independently governed entity that would offer market services across the largest possible footprint in the West. This effort, the West-Wide Pathways Governance Initiative (WWGPI), is led by a 26-member Launch Committee of diverse stakeholders.

If successful, WWGPI will assist with the creation of a regional wholesale energy market that facilitates reliable, affordable, and renewable electricity to all customers. However, it is imperative that any Western market reflects the diverse members and their needs, all across the region. This requires a robust stakeholder process that is inclusive of the states, entities, customers, and utilities that it serves.

WWGPI, through its fiscal sponsor Global Impact, is seeking Department of Energy (DOE) funding to assist with the development and implementation of a stakeholder engagement process to ensure WWGPI's efforts reflect the diversity of needs across the West required to break the deadlock of governance disagreements that previously stalled this effort. The project aims to:

- Examine and better understand existing processes for stakeholder engagement within other market structures and regional planning processes across the U.S.
- Develop an outreach and stakeholder engagement plan that reflects the diversity of the West and can be used as a model for other markets and/or regions.
- Convene key stakeholders across the West to ensure participation equity and inform a West-wide entity governance structure as well as creating opportunities for ongoing public and stakeholder feedback.
- Produce informational materials for state agencies, public interest organizations, utilities and other interested stakeholders.

This work will help enhance the grid's reliability and resilience, thereby supporting the region's manufacturing resurgence, promoting economic development, and creating new jobs. This effort will accelerate the energy transition through aiding the creation of an efficient, fair, and transparent market, supporting DOE's goals. This \$800,000 grant over two years will enable enlisting a subcontractor for the investigatory process; development of informational materials; outreach to key stakeholders; regular convenings through virtual and in-person gatherings; and facilitation to ensure meaningful participation.