Energy Markets and Transmission in the West: Information for Tribes

WRA Tribal Energy Workshops (Fall 2025)

Key Insights & Bridge to Spring 2026

Purpose of the Fall 2025 convenings

In September (New Mexico) and October (Arizona) 2025, Tribal leaders and Tribal-serving organizations gathered to learn together about fast-moving changes in Western energy markets and transmission planning and to explore what it can look like for Tribes to engage effectively in these processes.

2025 high-level takeaways

1) **The importance of markets and transmission decision-making is increasing.**
   Participants learned how evolving market structures and regional transmission planning processes can shape affordability, reliability, interconnection access, economic development potential, and the ability to pursue Tribal energy goals. Participants shared strong interest in understanding who decides what, where, and when—and how Tribes can engage those decision venues effectively.
2) **Governance + Tribal engagement requires attention at multiple levels.**
   Participants raised the importance of Tribal engagement—spanning market operators and governance structures; utility and transmission owner practices; state and federal regulators; and regional planning forums—and articulated the need for clear pathways for Tribal participation.
3) **Capacity support and technical assistance are foundational.**
   Participants noted that meaningful engagement requires time and durable staff capacity/specialized expertise (technical, legal, regulatory). Participants discussed the value of coalition-building around capacity support and technical assistance, alongside intentional partnership development with non-Tribal entities where helpful and aligned with Tribal goals.
4) **Tribally led policy development opportunities are emerging—and differ by community.**
   Participants noted that Tribal goals and strategies vary widely, and highlighted the importance of:
   respecting individual definitions of sovereignty and priorities ranging from affordability/reliability and electrification to economic development and ownership/operation of infrastructure
   supporting Tribal government energy policy development and implementation
   creating space for Tribes to articulate their own strategies for engagement
5) **Practical examples help clarify options and constraints.**
   Case study discussions helped participants think through potential business models and creative infrastructure solutions, negotiation dynamics, partnerships, regulatory strategy, and benefits frameworks. These discussions also highlighted real-world constraints such as transmission access and challenges engaging with utility structures (vertically integrated IOU/public power/co-ops) and regulatory frameworks.

How we're building on 2025 foundations for Spring 2026

The Spring 2026 workshop will be designed as an opportunity to deepen individual Tribal participant capacity and convert learning into practical, Tribe-relevant outputs—while also creating space for relationship-building and continued dialogue across participants.

Next steps

Stay tuned for future planning updates and take a few minutes to review the full summary notes from each workshop here and here. Contact Nadene Hubbard, nadene.hubbard@westernresources.org for questions, feedback, and suggestions.