

# Becoming a Rural Regional Energy Network

**Stephen Kullmann, Director of Demand Side  
Management, Redwood Coast Energy Authority**





# Background

---

- November 2021, MCOG and Lake APC reached out to RCEA to explore formation of a Regional Energy Network, or REN
- Because RCEA was already in the process of forming a REN and work was well underway to apply, the most expedient path forward was to include Lake and Mendocino Counties within RCEA territory, subcontracting work to MCOG and Lake APC with the intention of making MCOG and Lake APC full partners after the submission of the business plan.

# Advantages of a REN...



- By launching new programs, RENs bring energy efficiency incentives and increased technical support to previously underserved communities
- RENs are allowed to design innovative programs which focus on serving communities in ways traditional energy efficiency programs do not.
- Rural regions of California have a high energy cost to income ratio and have not received the same level of service as urban areas.

# The Basics



## Program Administrator

Redwood Coast Energy Authority

## Implementing Agencies by RuralREN Region

### *North Coast*

Redwood Coast Energy Authority  
in association with Lake Area Planning Council and Mendocino  
Council of Governments

### *Central Coast*

Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments  
County of San Luis Obispo

### *San Joaquin Valley*

San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Organization

### *Sierras*

High Sierra Energy Foundation  
Sierra Business Council

31 counties, 7,000,000\* people, 70,000\* square miles, 398 DACs, 66 Tribes, 81% in Tier 2 and 57% in Tier 3 Fire Zones, 3 IOUs, start date of 01/01/2023

*\*rounded for summation*



*The RuralREN will act as a catalyst to accelerate the implementation of the state's energy efficiency and climate goals in geographically hard-to-reach California. By leveraging rural regional collaboration, our trusted local relationships, and promoting pragmatic responses to community needs the RuralREN will help deliver a just and clean energy future.*

# GOALS

- ✓ Reduce energy use and GHG emissions in rural spaces.
- ✓ Increase rural access to energy efficiency programs and policies.
- ✓ Design and implement scalable programs that meet the needs of rural communities.
- ✓ Cultivate locally trained workforces that meet the needs of their communities.
- ✓ Build long term career opportunities in energy efficiency and clean energy for rural Californians.

# VALUES

Equity  
Independence  
Pragmatism

# INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- ✓ Reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions in buildings and infrastructure through installation of energy efficient measures.
- ✓ Ensure more equitable service delivery through increased customer education and assistance.
- ✓ Offer accessible and customized workforce trainings that foster and improve performance practices and knowledge of building science.
- ✓ Collaborate regionally, customize locally

# LONGTERM OUTCOMES

- ✓ Increase in energy-related career opportunities for the rural workforce.
- ✓ Help rural leaders better understand and embrace an equitable transition to a cleaner economy.
- ✓ Rural regions of California become leaders in the state's energy future.

- ✓ Reduction in energy costs for rural communities.
- ✓ Reduction in GHG emissions from rural spaces.





# Rural REN Proposed Budget and Programs

---

- Five-year budget covering six partners and seven programs is approximately \$96 million
- Redwood Coast Energy Authority is the Program Administrator for the entire REN
- Lake APC and MCOG will have the opportunity to participate in all seven programs as a subcontractor to RCEA



## Programs focused on Rural Equity and Market Support (non-resource)

- Public Agency, serving municipalities, school districts, public safety, tribal governments, and more
- Residential, targeting low to moderate income, raising energy awareness and providing energy efficiency audits
- Workforce Education and Training, creating pathways for community members to participate in the green economy
- Codes and Standards, supporting enforcement agencies and building professions to meet or exceed existing and new codes
- Finance, offering zero interest residential, commercial and public electrification and energy efficiency loans

# Residential and Non-Residential Resource Programs

- Focused on filling the unmet needs from other utility and statewide programs
- Deliver direct-to customer rebates for energy efficient and electrification upgrades as well as some direct install options
- Offered in RCEA (including Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties) and Sierra Business Council Territories only





# Benefits for Lake APC and MCOG

- Leverage work already done to design and apply as REN
- Receive guidance from six experienced energy program implementers as partner agencies
- Initial budget supports staff capacity at Lake APC and MCOG, programmatic incentives, and loan seed fund
- Rural REN Leadership Team recognizes desire for Lake APC and MCOG to become full REN members and will pursue this shortly after Business Plan filing



# Next Steps

- Letters of support from local jurisdictions
- Execute Memorandum of Understanding between RCEA, MCOG, and Lake APC for RCEA to implement energy programs in Lake and Mendocino Counties through the Rural REN
- Final Business Plan filing by March 4, 2022
- Upon approval by the California Public Utilities Commission, the Rural REN will begin operations in January 2023



A black and white photograph of a winter mountain landscape. The foreground is filled with evergreen trees heavily laden with snow. In the middle ground, a valley opens up, showing a dense forest of evergreens and a misty or foggy atmosphere. In the background, a large mountain range is visible, with snow patches on its slopes and a valley containing a lake. The sky is overcast and grey.

Thank you