

2026

CESA Members Meeting

September 15-17 | Detroit, MI

CleanEnergy
States Alliance



Tuesday, September 15, 2026—Optional Activities

2:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Tour of Detroit Highlights

A tour of downtown Detroit will feature the city's revitalization and highlight efforts to support cleantech innovation. The tour will include a guided tour of [Michigan Central](#), a restored train station that is at the heart of Detroit revitalization, and a half-hour guided tour of [Newlab Detroit](#) led by Ben Dueweke, Director of the [Michigan Climate Investment Hub](#). Participants will meet for the tour at the conference hotel at 2:30 pm.

7:00 pm

Optional Dinner Near the Meeting Hotel

Wednesday, September 16, 2025

9:00 am

Welcome and Setting the Stage for the Day's Discussions

9:30 am

Ice-Breaker Networking

10:15 am

How CESA Responded

Last year, the CESA staff asked the Members about how their priorities were changing and how CESA could help them respond to the changed federal policy environment and changing energy markets. In this session, the CESA staff will report on how they responded by launching new projects and modifying pre-existing projects.

10:45 am

Break

11:00 am

CESA Members Tackle Energy Affordability

Across the country, the public is concerned about rising energy costs. States have been taking a range of actions to address energy affordability, but it is difficult to impact prices in the electricity and buildings sectors because states have only limited influence over energy markets. Through short presentations and group discussion, this session will focus on concrete initiatives that have been launched by some states and could be applicable to other states.

12:15 pm

Lunch

1:15 pm

The Next Phase of State Clean Energy Action

Given that there is currently not a federal government clean energy partner, what policies should states pursue to accelerate the transition to a decarbonized clean energy system? Can states work together to advance climate policy? To set the stage for this discussion, CESA will host two pre-meeting webinars with leading clean energy thought leaders, including Sonia Aggarwal and Jigar Shah, presenting their ideas for states.

- Facilitator: Warren Leon, CESA Executive Director

2:30 pm
Break

2:45 pm
Local Clean Energy Efforts and How States Can Support Them

Many municipalities and community organizations remain committed to taking advancing clean energy and there are ways in which state energy agencies can help them. This session will include case studies of two local initiatives that have been supported by the state—the Detroit Solar Neighborhood Project and Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility. It will also include an overview of clean energy action at the local level.

- Facilitator: Nate Hausman, CESA Senior Project Director for the VPP Acceleration Initiative
- Panelists
 - Tepfirah Rushdan, Director of Sustainability, City of Detroit
 - Missy Stults, Director, Sustainability & Innovations, City of Ann Arbor

4:00 pm
Break

4:15 pm
How to Provide Effective Messages on Clean Energy Affordability

How can program managers and state energy agency leaders design programs, partnerships, and messages so that affordability benefits are understandable, credible, and visible to the public? CESA members will leave this session understanding: (1) why affordability messaging often fails; (2) which messages resonate most with different audiences; (3) how program staff can support communications teams; (4) how program design itself can reinforce affordability messages; and more.

- Facilitator: Anna Ziai, CESA Project Director

5:30 pm
Adjourn

6:30 pm
Dinner Near the Meeting Hotel

Thursday, September 17, 2026

9:00 am

VPPs: Recent Developments in the World of VPPs

With increasing attention from policymakers, utilities, and energy businesses, there have been many relevant developments to keep track of. This session will start with an introduction to VPP resources, an update on FERC 2222, which enables distributed energy resources to participate in regional wholesale electricity markets. The session will then showcase CESA Member programs that emphasize new concepts/values focus on equity.

- Facilitator: Todd Olinsky-Paul, CESA Senior Project Director

10:15 am

Break

10:30 am

Members' Requests of CESA: Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: Member Input into the VPP Acceleration Initiative

CESA has launched the VPP Acceleration Initiative, but what are specific ways in which CESA can help states through this initiative and what are specific resources the members would like to see CESA produce?

- Facilitator: Nate Hausman

Breakout 2: Member Input into CESA Work on Strategic Communications

CESA has been holding Water Cooler sessions on aspects of messaging and strategic communications. We want to know what else we should do: what are specific ways in which CESA can help states and what are specific resources the members would like to see CESA produce?

- Facilitator: Anna Ziai

11:00 am

Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: What's Next for Energy Equity: State Strategies for Lasting Impact

Many states manage large portfolios of grants and subgrants. The challenge becomes how to design grant programs so that community-based organizations, local governments, Tribes, and smaller entities can actually compete?

- Facilitator: Anna Ziai

Breakout 2: Supporting State-Led Cleantech Innovation

CESA is launching an initiative to help innovative, state-supported building decarbonization and energy efficiency technology providers gain access to new demonstration and commercialization opportunities. This session will focus on how CESA members can coordinate efforts to help new and innovative building decarbonization technology providers find opportunities to grow.

- Facilitator: Sam Schacht, CESA Project Director

12:15 pm

Lunch

1:15 pm

Creative Financing for Clean Energy

The landscape for clean energy financing has changed because of changes to energy markets and federal policies. States need to consider supporting new and different ways to finance clean energy. This session will explore creative financing approaches that states can replicate.

- Presenters
 - Kerry O'Neill, CEO, Inclusive Prosperity Capital
 - Sally Talberg, CEO, Michigan Saves

2:30 pm

Break

2:45 pm

Spreading CESA Members' Recent Initiatives

Many states have recently developed innovative initiatives that can be adapted and replicated by other states. This session will focus on some of those initiatives.

3:45 pm

Close-Out

Summarizing the results of the meeting and identifying next steps. This session will give special attention to the assistance that CESA can and should provide to members in the coming year.

4:15 pm

Adjourn
