The Collaborative, Long-Term Approach to Lasting Regional Change

The Commercial Code Enhancement (CCE) initiative aims to bridge the gap between current market practices and state policies by identifying, assessing, and validating the feasibility and affordability of the next-generation technologies and practices for commercial building construction. To ensure that the Northwest adopts solution-oriented, market-supported efficiency opportunities, the program identifies and validates technologies and practices and then works to build market awareness, capability, and support for new associated code measures.

This multi-state collaborative effort is fueled and informed by regional utilities and energy efficiency organizations, code experts and market partners who work together to identify and tackle major market barriers to code change. These barriers include lack of awareness, not only for the technologies and practices themselves, but also for their value and suitability for Northwest markets. The initiative works to address these awareness barriers by demonstrating cost-effectiveness and feasibility through case studies, technical analysis and outreach efforts.

To further support the market in this gradual transition to more stringent commercial building codes, the initiative includes a working group of utility and energy efficiency organization representatives committed to aligning current and future utility programs around the most advantageous technologies and practices under consideration for future code adoption cycles. By connecting current market practices with state code requirements, and by supporting utility programs to help them foster the market’s advancement, CCE works to minimize regional growing pains in the face of inevitable code change.

"Working with NEEA helps Energy Trust of Oregon chart a path for our customers that evolves in tandem with advancements in technology, standards and markets. The work NEEA is doing to spearhead this process will benefit our customers now and well into the future."

- Jessica Iplikci, Senior Program Manager, Energy Trust of Oregon
Program Alignment Through Regional Collaboration

In 2018, the alliance developed a new proposal for the 2018 Washington State commercial energy code that is currently under public review led by the State Building Code Council. The proposal calls for a Total System Performance Ratio (TSPR) requirement that would compel building designers to evaluate HVAC systems based on whole-system performance rather than by individual HVAC components. This approach would significantly reduce building energy use by encouraging building designers to incorporate higher-efficiency HVAC systems into their projects.

The idea for this proposal came from the City of Seattle, with the alliance and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) joining in to help prepare the code proposal. A key component of this proposal is a free software tool developed by PNNL that would help building designers model the efficiency of a building’s HVAC system to demonstrate compliance.

The new code requirement will set minimum allowable TSPR targets for each building type based on the building’s specific characteristics. The region now has the opportunity to align its programs around the forthcoming, new requirement by encouraging and incenting market actors to achieve TSPR targets higher than what code requires. As market practices shift beyond the TSPR code targets, code requirements will rise, and Northwest buildings will continue to use less energy.

“The CCE working group of utility representatives, along with the City of Seattle and PNNL, was crucial in helping us get the TSPR proposal and the market moving forward in lockstep. It really is a fully collaborative process every step of the way.”

- Neil Grigsby, Portfolio Program Manager, NEEA

Together We Are Transforming the Northwest